

THE
NATURAL SON;

A NOVEL;

IN TWO VOLUMES.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF

M. DIDEROT,

Author of the Nun, James the Fatalist, &c.

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THE
NATURAL SON.

LETTER XXXIII.

AH! where is my dear Dormeuille, my only consolation and support. In spite of the distance that separates us, Ah! let your friendly affection solace my wearied heart, which unpitied Destiny has again overpowered with a new and dreadful calamity. I am born to be miserable, and to become a torment to all my friends. Are you

not already tired of my lamentations ? And will not your friendship murmur at being thus continually taxed, till you can scarcely avoid shuddering with horror, and weeping with compassion ? As long as we continue surrounded by prosperity and happiness, 'tis natural we should be always beloved. But, alas ! the unfortunate have very few friends. Dormeuille, I do not include you in this censure. No, I am too well acquainted with your virtues.

After my promise of writing on my arrival, you will have felt much uneasiness at the length of time that has elapsed, without receiving any intelligence of me. Would to God, my dear friend, that negligence on my part were the only cause of this deficiency. When you have read this letter, you will know the new misfortune that has occasioned it. I will describe
every

every incident of my journey to you at length, for to your friendship they cannot be uninteresting, and to me it will afford some relief, to unbosom my affliction.

When I declared my last resolution to you, I perceived how severely it affected you, and I was therefore determined to spare you the pain of parting. It was a sacrifice that cost me the greatest efforts, and, even at the moment of my departure, I could scarcely resist the impulse of my heart. The very idea of seeing you no more, seemed to rob me of every faculty. I felt throughout my frame a kind of melancholy horror, which the silent darkness of the night encreased. I must have yielded to the desire of embracing you once more, had not George hurried me away.

I made him ride with me in the carriage, the time being very short

that I should have it in my power to see him, and it being necessary to prepare his mind for his change of situation, and fortify him against the grief of losing for ever, a master he loved. You will easily imagine this separation afflicted me no less than him; but I concealed my sorrow, because I was certain he would never have consented to quit me, had he seen what was passing in my heart.

I forgot myself, however, for a moment, when speaking of the uneasiness I had caused him. I was running over all the past events of my life, my infancy at Richard's, the happy illusion I there enjoyed, the innocent pleasures of that delightful age, which we ever recal with transport, my education at the house of my father's friend, the great care his affection bestowed on me, the loss I sustained by his death, the misfortunes that followed

lowed that event, and the discovery of my birth which completed my misery. The recital of these circumstances, which I felt a pleasure in prolonging, melted me by degrees till I shed a deluge of tears. The worthy George participated my emotions, and frequently seizing my hands, pressed them with tenderness, and wept.

This affecting sight of my aged attendant in tears, gave me the liveliest sensation of grief, but it was a grief mingled with a soothing thrill of pleasure.

I endeavoured to console him by representing the happy and peaceful lot that awaited him in your house. "My dear George," said I, "we are about to separate for a very long time, but you will have an excellent master in my stead. The Count of Dormeuille will love you as well, and render you far more happy. In lieu

of having grief constantly impressed upon his brow, his character is extremely amiable, and his sweetness of temper, and gaiety of disposition, never vary. Every one loves him, every thing around him breathes the most perfect contentment. He is a kind master, a good landlord, an affectionate son, a zealous friend, and a tender husband. With him you will be happy; but with me your lot would have been far from comfortable. Perhaps, soured by long continued misfortunes, I might become tyrannical.—Perhaps I might become the scourge of your old age.” George answered, smiling, “ Oh! no, Sir,—*you* become a bad master? No, that is impossible. Your fault would rather be too much kindness, and too easily believing other men as sincere, and as good as yourself. But that is not the question——Do you then
imagine,

imagine, Sir," said he, after a pause, "that I could ever consent to leave you? Ah! Sir, you do not know George's heart. Quit you, and attach myself to another?—Oh! no, my heart can never change in that manner. Monsieur de Dormeuille has, doubtless, many virtues, since you have chosen him for your friend; but had he a hundred times as many, it would be impossible I could serve him, if to do that I must leave you. Could he ever make me forget my good master? Could I expect to be happy and contented with him, when I must give up the hope of ever seeing you more? No, Sir, my life would be very miserable—I should be quite inconsolable. I have served you, Sir, and loved you, ever since you were born; for it was I who brought you every thing that was sent you at Richard's, and if I have seemed ig-

norant of many things, it was only because I saw you wished to conceal them from me. I am resolved, Sir, to end my life in your service. I promised the Marquis D'Offan never to leave you, and now you are going to live in a monastery, I will go there too. They will receive me as a servant, and I want nothing more than my board, for all my wish is to live with you. Perhaps I may be more useful to you than any other person; for who knows so well the cause of your unhappiness, and how to console you in your grief?

“ Such, Sir, is my determination. I concealed it from you hitherto, and suffered you to believe I would accept the Count's kind offer; but it was merely to avoid being counteracted in my design. Though you intended to bequeath me 20,000 livres, you see I have not the least need of them; but,

but, I have some very poor relations: be so kind as to divide that sum among them, and then, instead of one, you will make ten persons happy."

Judge, my dear Dormeuille, of my astonishment, and my gratitude, for this proof of George's friendship. "Ah!" said I, as I embraced him with transport, "I should be less miserable when consoled by your kind offices."

I could not cease admiring his devotion to me, or telling him how much I was pleased with it. How sweet to my afflicted heart, were the expressions of friendship and attachment of this worthy man! They seemed to afford me a healing balm, my destiny appeared less shocking, and I felt a gleam of consolation to my grief. Surely, to know we are beloved, is the most soothing delight that can warm the heart,

or heal the bosom of wounded sensibility.

Blind that I was! I was embracing a phantom of hope, while I stood on the edge of the precipice of despair.

After some days travelling, I found the carriage so fatiguing, that I determined to take my passage in a vessel bound for Spain. At first the ocean afforded me innumerable objects of meditation, from which I experienced the happiest effects. The sky was serene, the sea tolerably smooth, and a favourable wind wasted us with rapidity through the waves. The vast uniformity of the surface, the hollow and melancholy roar of the ocean, the azure firmament it seemed to reflect, and which formed a vault over all this boundless desert, composed a sublime and awful picture, which filled me with a mixture of horror and veneration.

tion. Though I was affected by the general sadness that prevailed around me, this was attended with no heart-felt pang, and by leading me into pleasing reveries, it maintained that soothing tranquillity, which George's friendship had shed over my whole moral frame.

This tranquillity, the effect, perhaps, of the weak state of a mind almost worn out by grief, continued till the evening preceding our arrival, when we had a total and sudden change of weather.

The sky was overcast with dark clouds, which, gathering by degrees, almost converted day into night. The sea became high, a dreadful roar seemed to come from the land, and was re-echoed from the rocks with increasing terror, accompanied by the most violent howlings. While the raging winds threatened our vessel with destruction,

the rigging was every moment breaking, the sails tearing, the waves rising mountain high, then suddenly falling with a destructive crash. Sometimes our ship was laid down by a sea, or pitching and rolling with the utmost violence, sometimes carried up to the clouds, then as suddenly ingulphed between the waves.

During this dreadful tempest, every one expected instant destruction. The captain himself was unable to conceal his uneasiness, and it was easy to discover in his countenance and manner, that little hope of safety remained. Sailors, officers, passengers, every one was in the greatest consternation, every one was addressing prayers and vows to heaven.

Though your unfortunate friend, alas! had little reason to regret the loss of life, yet he felt severely agitated at the first aspect of approaching death.

death. I remember a moment, when struck by a heavy sea, and believing myself inevitably lost, I cried out with anguish, "Oh! my mother! Oh! my friend! Must I then no more embrace you."

Yet, how can I reconcile this emotion, with the design of which you prevented the execution, or that of quitting for ever, all that is dear to me in life? My friend it is impossible to account for all the contradictions of the human heart. Reason itself does not acquaint us with all its secret folds.

The next moment, however, I made up my mind, and could have contemplated the most violent convulsions of nature, with cool and tranquil admiration, had not the objects by which I was surrounded, harrowed up my very soul. Many were praying
to

to God for one day more, to take their last farewell of their affectionate wives, whom they had not seen for more than five years. Others implored his mercy to their children, who would now be destitute of support. But what affected me most tenderly was a girl about fifteen years old, in whom I felt extremely interested, not only on account of her beauty, but still more for her softness of manners, and her affectionate attention to her father, a venerable old man of sixty. She held his hand constantly between her's, spoke to him with the greatest tenderness, and endeavoured to give him hopes of safety. The old man wept as he received the caresses of his lovely girl. He had no hopes of living to any remote period, should he escape the present danger; but the idea that his young and beautiful daughter

daughter would shortly be plunged in all the horrors of an untimely death, overpowered him with grief. The sight of this old man, and this charming girl affected me severely. My eyes were constantly fixed upon them. I participated their sufferings, and when the cruel waves, that each moment deluged the deck, invaded this interesting group, I was petrified with the cold that assailed the father, and distracted with the anguish that tore the bosom of the daughter. Though reduced to extreme debility, she used her utmost efforts to wipe, to warm, and to console her aged father. Alas! she was not long able to continue her tender cares. A heavy sea carried away the part of the vessel to which they held, and a moment afterwards I beheld them struggling with the waves, and dashed against the pointed rocks.

What

What a picture for the heart of sensibility ! It was a dreadful sight, which my nature could not support. As I turned from it with horror, another object almost equally affected me. George was on his knees, with his hands joined, fervently stretched towards heaven. Each moment he pronounced my name with that of the supreme disposer of events, to whom he was praying for me.—Such complicated emotions of grief, and of despair, bewildered my mind and exhausted my strength. I could neither complain nor weep. An awful depression paralyzed all my powers, and I could scarcely extend my arms or cry out, “ George ! come my dear George, and embrace your master for the last time.”—He was advancing towards me, and stretching out his hand, when, on a sudden, the vessel went in pieces with a horrid crash, and men
and

and women, the worthy George, and the most unfortunate of men, all—all were swallowed up.

Oh! inexorable Nature, why, why is thy anger to me alone implacable? Why hast thou re-animated me, after so many misfortunes? Why hast thou restored me to life, to give me a thousand cruel deaths each day of my existence?

From the moment I was plunged in the sea, I lost all sensation, and became unconscious of every thing that happened during two days. When I first opened my eyes, I faintly discovered that I was in a cottage, stretched on a mean bed, and attended by a woman and two men. All my faculties were so disordered, and so weakened, that I had no distinct ideas, and every object presented itself to my mind distorted and confused. My first emotion was to call out "George, George,

George, is it you, George?" The woman then approached my bed, and said to me in Spanish, " My good Sir, recollect yourself, and recal your reason. You are just saved from shipwreck, and brought to the cottage of us poor people, and there is no George here." By degrees I seemed to regain strength, and then perceived that neither of the two men was George, as I had believed during my delirium. The one was a poor Spanish peasant, the husband of the woman, the other I instantly recollected to be one of the sailors. When he told me that we alone had escaped, the idea that George was lost, struck me with sudden horror. Ah! what a cruel pang of grief I felt at this intelligence. " George, then, is no more," said I, " that worthy fellow, who loved me so affectionately, and so generously devoted his whole existence

istence to my service ! Dormeuille, I was quite miserable. “ This George, Sir,” said the sailor, “ whom you are lamenting, well deserved your friendship. If you knew all”——“ What do you mean ?” said I,—“ I should grieve you too much, Sir,” said he.—“ No matter,” replied I, with impatience, “ finish what you were about to say.” Ah ! Dormeuille, this last trait alone was wanting to increase my affliction. Can you believe it ?—But you know that he loved me more than he loved himself. That worthy, that admirable fellow, pointed me out to all the sailors, an hour before we were lost, and on his knees entreated them to do every thing in their power to save me, assuring them they would be more richly recompensed than they could imagine. In short, my dear friend, animated by the eloquence of his generous heart,

one

one of the sailors followed me through the waves, among the other victims of the storm, and snatched me from the hand of death at the hazard of his own destruction.

What attachment! what heroism! In his last moments, when every man concentrates all his faculties on his own preservation, that virtuous servant forgot his approaching fate, to think only of his master! Such fortitude is amazing! Great God! Now that he reposes in thy bosom—Ah! may thy justice grant him all the felicity heaven can afford.

I continued several days with the good peasants, together with my deliverer, till I was completely re-established. It would be impossible to express all I owe to their cares and attentions. I have given the sailor a letter addressed to you, which he will deliver in a month or two. I intreat
you

you to recompense him for his courage. As for myself, I have too little reason to be fond of life to be able to appreciate his services. Your friendship alone will affix to them all the value that is due: and do not, I entreat you, forget the poor Spanish peasants, who so disinterestedly shared with me their black bread.

Such, my friend, is the narrative of my voyage. It would acquaint you, were you not already too well convinced of it, under what hostile stars I have the misfortune to be born.

What sufferings, what grief, what cruel privations from my earliest infancy! There is not a wretch, not an old man on the verge of the grave, who has experienced so much affliction, or so disturbed the air with sighs, or watered the path of life with such bitter tears. Alas! My faculties have suffered greatly from this continued depression,

pression, and an insupportable languor drags me to the grave. My dwelling is ever marked by melancholy and silence.

I am now in a monastery of Carthusians, which I found near the cottage of my hospitable peasants. The peaceful life of these monks is suited to the temper of my soul, whose chief want is tranquillity and repose. The father abbé received me in a very obliging manner. No doubt he read my misfortunes in my countenance, for I observed him melt with compassion as he looked at me. At first he objected to my youth, and, like a wise man, whom long experience has matured, he was desirous that, previous to taking the solemn oath, I should become acquainted with the full extent of the duties I was about to contract. But neither the austerities of a religious life, nor the fatigues
of

of constant praying, could shake my resolution; and very shortly an indissoluble bond will unite me with these Cenobites, without a hope of ever seeing you, my dear friend, nor of ever seeing——

Oh! my friend, what dreadful thoughts invade the happy lethargy that soothed my misfortunes, and lulled my heart to rest.—I am quite exhausted.—Adieu, my dearest friend.

P. S. I have added to this letter the requisite particulars of George's loss, for the satisfaction of his relations. Go to those good people. Carry them the sum I had intended for that most worthy man, and which he gave up to them. Tell them what a virtuous relative they have lost, that they may endeavour to resemble him. Who would not wish to possess a mind like that of George?

Do

Do not omit to enquire concerning the family of Richard, and that of Mathurin; and most assiduously observe the minutest circumstance that may give you any information relative to the situation of my mother. Let your letters be full of these accounts. They will now be more interesting to me than ever.

Once more adieu, my dear Dormeuille. 'Tis with regret that I finish this letter. I wish I could write to you for ever.

LETTER XXXIV.

DORMEUILLE to his FRIEND.

THE history of your voyage has affected me extremely. I could not
read

read it without the most mournful reflections on the injustice of that destiny, which delights in tormenting, with so much fury, the man most worthy of unmixed happiness. After the cruel privations you have ever suffered, you still possessed one voluntary self-devoted companion, who was following you into your retirement, and would have consoled you for all your sufferings. Yet of this comfort you are deprived by an unforeseen calamity. Ah! how sincerely I regret that worthy servant, the good and virtuous George, who loved his master with so uncommon, so affecting an attachment. Yet, in spite of all his good qualities, inexorable Death has swept him away. This event, while it recalls to my mind all the misfortunes you have, in swift succession, experienced, convinces me more than ever, that the good things of this world are

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but weak and bending reeds, on which we ought never to rely.

My friend, the sufferings that oppress you fall also upon me. Your situation gives me the greatest pain. You must, however, acknowledge that, although so rudely handled by fortune, you ought, in some measure, to blame yourself for it. Why thus fly from your friends; from true and sincere friends, who were anxious to alleviate your affliction, and offered you, with their hearts, all the happiness they could bestow? You feared disturbing our tranquillity. Unjust friend! Is it then possible for you to disturb the happiness of those who love you, and who even find delight in participating your sufferings? True friendship never flies from the aspect of misfortune. You know how many substantial reasons I opposed, though in vain, to your romantic ideas. I flatter

ter myself you are now convinced of your error, and that you regret the slighted offer I made you with so much sincerity. In the dwelling of Friendship you would have found that frankness and constancy, those soothing sympathies of confidence and love, where the slightest glance speaks with an animated eloquence, which the pen must ever coldly pourtray. But these are fruitless wishes and superfluous regrets.

Notwithstanding the pain you give us, and which I believe I shall never forgive, I have devoted myself to every object that can interest your feelings. I shall give you an account of my proceedings, which I am convinced will afford you some consolation in your melancholy solitude.

In the first place, I gave the two children you called your play-fellows the little presents you desired. They received them with inexpressible joy

and satisfaction, but they wanted very much to see you again. and asked repeatedly where you were. When they found all their prayers and solicitations were in vain, they grew very impatient, and even ill-humoured, and cried bitterly all the time I staid. Though I promised you should soon come and see them, they were seriously angry with me, and would scarcely suffer me to steal a kiss, when I took my leave. Their parents are very poor. I therefore gave them some assistance, and, by several legal steps I took for them, have been fortunate enough to terminate a law-suit, which has for many years been undermining their little fortune.

George's relations were the next objects of your bounty. They were in a state of wretchedness, which is now succeeded by joy and abundance. Accept, my dear friend, all the blessings

sings these unfortunate people poured forth upon your name. They assured me, that every night they will address their prayers to heaven for your happiness. God grant, their wishes may be fulfilled! Their change of fortune affected me in a lively manner. They could scarcely believe their sudden riches, and continually looked at each other, as it were, to see whether it was a dream.

From thence I paid a visit to Richard. Here my heart was affected by new scenes, though of a very different nature from the last. Your liberality and beneficence were unable to console this family for the misfortune of losing you for ever. That idea made them miserable. They were all in tears at once: Henry, Richard, Margaret, Lewis, James, Cecily, Blanche, and Annette. My dear friend, these good people are

most affectionately fond of you. When I gave them your flute and your peasant's working coat, they at first shewed great pleasure, but, at the recollection of the scenes these objects recalled, they again shed tears, though less bitterly than before. They talked long of your infancy, of the pleasure you seemed to enjoy in living with them, and the friendship they had always felt for you. "Alas!" said Richard, "why did the Marquis D'Ossan take him away? With us he was happy, but from the first moment he entered into the world, he has only known grief and misfortune. Would it not have been far better to have left him in total ignorance of his birth? He would then have constantly regarded us as his father and mother, his brothers and sisters; and we should always have loved him as much as if he were our own child."

The

The little Cecily is to be married in a month. How she grieved that you could not be at the wedding! I promised, however, to fill your place, though I could easily perceive, by her manner of thanking me, that it would by no means be the same thing. You perceive, my dear friend, how dear you are to this worthy family. Indeed I cannot wonder at it. Whoever knows your value, must grant you the first place in his friendship and esteem.

After quitting Richard, what do you suppose was the next object of my attention? You will easily guess. How was it possible I should not desire to know your worthy mother, whom your letters have rendered so interesting to me, and whom you have made me love by every thing you have said of her? I had also another motive. I was certain it would not

be indifferent to her to receive certain intelligence of a son she loves so tenderly, and from whom she had been separated in so distressing a manner. I hoped also by this step to procure a fund of happiness for your filial affection. All these motives induced me to set out for Clermont.

But as I was unacquainted with the Marquis, how could I introduce myself? This was a great embarrassment to me. At first innumerable difficulties presented themselves; till, by long reflecting on them, a very simple means suddenly occurred, which I eventually employed. I contrived to arrive rather late at night, and then presented myself as a traveller who had lost his road, begging hospitality for the night, and not doubting but the politeness of the inhabitants of the castle would prolong my stay as much as would answer my intention. Fortunately

tunately, the night was very bad and stormy, and a most heavy rain, which was succeeded at intervals by a dreadful wind, rendered my situation apparently very pitiable.

The Marquis was gone to stay a couple of days at the town, and the Marchioness being in bed, the servants refused to disturb her. I entreated and supplicated long in vain. At length an old house-keeper undertook to mention me to the Marchioness, and her answer being favorable, I was received.

Figure to yourself how I was delighted, when fortune thus seconded my enterprize. Not a single obstacle now opposed me, and I was sure of as long an interview as I could desire. Next morning I asked for liberty to return my acknowledgements in person to Madame de Clermont for the kind hospitality she had afforded me.

She received my thanks with that engaging modesty, and that goodness of heart, you have so often praised, and which appear to form the basis of her character. She was alone. What a favorable opportunity! Yet I dared not reveal the secret I came to declare. Having exhausted all I had to say, I remained silent, and at a loss how to prolong my interview. Her presence affected me unaccountably, and the fear of shocking her feelings, and causing some unforeseen misfortune, by intelligence so unexpected, robbed me of the power of speech. I am certain she observed my embarrassment, for I perceived a suffusion on her cheek. At length I took courage. As soon as she learnt my pretended mistake of the road, and the subject of my journey, she screamed, and almost fainted. Fortunately, however, no one came, and she soon partly

partly recovered from the effects of the surprize. I saw this tender and virtuous mother alternately change colour, grow pale, cast her eyes downwards, and weep. She dared not either look at me, or utter a single word. But as I expected this timidity, or rather disconfidence, I had brought with me all your letters relative to your history, which I shewed to her. Being then convinced that I was really your bosom friend, and acquainted with all your secrets, she granted me her confidence, and sought no longer to conceal her maternal tenderness and concern. What charming sensibility, what amiable sweetness she possesses! Ah! my friend, I thought myself thoroughly acquainted with her by your letters. But I have seen her, and find you had but imperfectly described her excellencies.

When her first emotions had subsided, she was very anxious to learn the state of your health, and particularly what had happened to you since your cruel separation. I answered all her enquiries fully and accurately, excepting one *attempt*, which, as it would have given her much pain, I studiously concealed. When she heard of the sudden decline of your health, of the effect her letter produced on your sensibility, and the resolution you had formed in consequence, to separate yourself for ever from the world, she cried out, with the strongest emotion, "My God, how wretched am I!" All my endeavours to console her were in vain, and even my promise to keep up a constant correspondence with you, afforded her no relief. She abandoned herself to all the bitterness of sorrow, and listened to nothing but despair.

despair. Fortunately her children came in, and interrupted us. It was the hour of their first visit to wish their kind mamma a good morning. When they appeared, she stifled her tears and her grief, and caressed them with the most tender smiles. Ah! how affecting a picture is a virtuous mother surrounded by a lovely offspring!

She presently said to them, in the softest voice, "Go, my dears, and leave me a little while." The three little cherubs then left us, and we resumed our conversation.

The impression she had just received from the interruption seemed so beneficial to her ruffled spirits, that I endeavoured to continue its effect as long as possible by the turn of my conversation. And how could I better succeed in this, than by relating to her all the virtues and perfections

fections of her unfortunate son? his feeling and compassionate heart, his sweetness of disposition, his amiable manners, his knowledge, his talents, and the good actions he continually performed: virtues for which every one who knew him loved him? She listened to me with the most lively interest, and answered me in a tone of voice peculiarly expressive of maternal affection, "His virtues are known to me, but they only add new motives of self-accusation. Alas! Can such a mind be a martyr to continual wretchedness and misery?"

"You, sir," she resumed, after a moment's pause, "You, whom he loves so tenderly, and whom he has so much reason to love, will surely not abandon him. His sensibility, which so often misleads him, requires a wiser guide, and his affectionate heart demands an object on which to fix.

fix. This is the only happiness that remains to the unfortunate. May he find it in you. Too long oppressed by misfortune, he has no longer sufficient strength of mind to conduct himself alone. Support him when he totters, and receive his secret griefs in your sympathising bosom. Continue always to love him, for he deserves your esteem. May your kind and soothing friendship afford him those consolations which his retirement demands; and may he never be deprived of that blessing. Abandoned to himself, grief would soon destroy him; but supported by a friend like you, he may yet taste a thousand pleasures which he might otherwise never know. Ah! Sir, I intreat you do not desert him. Above all, endeavour to inform me, as often as prudence will permit, of every thing that concerns him;

him; but, for God's sake, let me not hear of him by any one but yourself."

My answer to this discourse, procured me the most affecting acknowledgements. But, when I told her I would change my residence, to live near her, and form an acquaintance with the Marquis, in order to see her more frequently without mystery or danger, she was agitated with the most lively emotions, and scarcely knew how to express her gratitude.

I endeavoured to take advantage of this state of her mind, to gain some intelligence regarding your sister, but in vain. She entreated me never to mention the subject to her again.

Such was in part my conversation with your worthy mother, that most amiable and most interesting of women. As to her own condition,
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it is as happy as it can be with a husband so little suited to her character. He treats her with that respect which her sex, and her uncommon virtues demand. His jealousy, of which he soon perceived the injustice, did not continue long; for, the conduct of his faithful wife, is pure from every imputation, and she is universally respected and beloved. When virtue is constant and unerring, it triumphs over the feeble powers of suspicion and jealousy. Do you remember the fable of the young girl chaining a lion?—The allegory is fine, and its accuracy apparent. She now seems to have very little to complain of from her husband. He is not much with her, and passes the day, either in hunting, or in the town. During his absence she remains in undisturbed tranquillity with her children, which, to an affectionate mother

ther, is the happiest mode of employing her time. Shake off, then the anxiety you felt for her, and tasting the unmixed pleasure of loving her as she deserves, imagine you behold her charming, her angelic form, constantly surrounded by her lovely offspring.

Her children often speak of you, and ask why you never come and play with them. You may easily imagine these recollections are very pleasing to Madame de Clermont, and as her husband is never witness of their enquiries, she seeks not to repress them, but takes a pleasure in continuing to talk of you. Sometimes she makes her little girl play the air you were so fond of, and to which you composed an accompaniment. On these occasions this worthy mother seems to hear her little girl's voice, with additional fondness, and to recal, with
secret

secret delight, all the caresses, all the little attentions her children received at your hands.

I should have continued longer to enjoy the society of a lady, who interested me on so many various accounts, had not decency obliged me to limit my stay at Clermont to a single day. But I departed in the hope of returning more than once, when you will often become the subject of our conversation. May this idea enable you to support an eternal slavery, on which I cannot reflect without horror.

Adieu, my dear friend, and be assured I will do all in my power, to realize the hopes of Madame de Clermont.

P. S. I did not forget Mathurin. His little family are all extremely happy; but I think he would be still happier, if you could now and then
come

come to see him. These good people regret you sincerely. They have not forgot that to you they owe their life, and all the comforts they enjoy.

LETTER XXXV.

WHAT pleasure, my dear Dormeuille, your letter has given me! Ah! how often did I read it, and bedew it with the tears of sensibility and joy. You have, then performed the journey I so much wished. This instance of assiduity, is a new proof of your friendship; which, far from being dismayed at my griefs and misfortunes, only becomes more zealously active,

active, and more tenderly affectionate.

You have seen my mother, and she talked of me. Her expressions of kindness are very soothing to me; but tell her to give herself no uneasiness concerning my present condition. Assure her I am not unhappy, and that the idea of having the most amiable, the most virtuous of mothers, will alone suffice to make me completely blessed.

My dear Dormeuille, are you not enchanted with this adorable mother? You must acknowledge it is uncommon to find so much beauty and intelligence, so much genius and sweetness, united in one woman. There is a certain indescribable charm in every thing she says or does, which, as it were, pervades her whole character, and inspires every one with respect and love.

I can-

I cannot then be surpris'd at the interest she excites in you, or the sacrifice you are about to make to be her neighbour. I know I am in some degree the cause of your determination, and this idea delights me. It would, if possible, increase my attachment to you.

You assure me that my mother is happy. I fear you are flattering me? How is it possible, that despicable Marquis should so suddenly have changed. Can a regard to justice ever influence a depraved heart? No, the fact, I imagine, is, that his indifference induces him to leave the objects that surround him, quiet and undisturbed.

What you say of the children, at once pleases and affects me. I am very fond of those dear little creatures. Faithful emblems of innocence and truth, their caresses may
be

be received with confidence, while those of men, alas ! are too often perfidious.

Yes, I remember with transport, the moments I have passed with Madame de Clermont's children ; sometimes joining in their innocent diversions, as if I had been their little playfellow, sometimes supplying the place of their mother, in the cultivation of the happy dispositions they have received from nature.

I joined in their amusement with a heart-felt interest, and was more attached to the objects they delighted in, than to my own pleasures. The strength of my affection was astonishing. Alas ! I felt, without knowing it, the secret ties by which Nature had united us.

What delightful sensations they awakened in my bosom ! When I beheld them so lovely and so gay,
when

when I said to myself, "These children then are happy," I participated in the enjoyment which their ignorance of any other state seemed to render secure. Strangers to anxiety and pain, they abandoned themselves, without reserve, to that sacred sentiment of joy and pleasure which commences with our earliest wants, or, rather, with existence itself. We imbibe it with our milk, and it grows stronger by continually reposing on the breast of her who gave us life. Ah! Why must such transporting thoughts be mingled with so many bitter sorrows and vexations?

Her reflections regarding whatever may render my future destiny more happy, are judicious, and natural to a mind which is constantly seeking to benefit every one who has the good fortune to know her. She seems to be well acquainted with my heart, for
now she

she speaks of your friendship as one of my most lively enjoyments. Yes, Dormeuille, my thoughts are ever occupied with you, and you are a principal object in all my reveries. Your image constantly accompanies me, and often consoles me in my afflictions. I often trace back the time to the commencement of our friendship, and recal the pleasure we both enjoyed in communicating to each other our most secret thoughts. I remember our mutual hints and advice relative to our various pursuits and literary studies, given with such disinterested enthusiasm, and received with such pure satisfaction; the eagerness with which we quitted our companions to be together and enjoy each other's company, because we only found in each other that harmony of sentiment, that unison of character, which alone forms real friendships,

and proves to mankind there is no true felicity but in the union of the heart. Imagination revives our disputes relative to the arts and sciences, which you discussed with so much genius and candor. I renew our rustic walks and the sacred enthusiasm that animated us when contemplating the works of nature. These sweet remembrances often bid the tear of pleasure trickle down my cheek. Who would imagine that, imprisoned in a solitary chamber, where every thing wears the aspect of melancholy sadness, I should sometimes taste the most exquisite enjoyments? No, Dormeuille, there is no prison so dark and gloomy that friendship cannot illuminate, no condition so miserable, on which her consolations cannot shed a healing balm.

LET-

LETTER XXXVI.

*Che più d'un giorno è la vita mortale,
Nubilo, breve, freddo, e pien di noia;
Che più bella parer, ma nulla vale?*

What else is life but winter's dismal day?
How short, how clouded, cold, and full of
grief,
And tho' at first some joys it may display,
We soon but pant for Death's sad last relief.

I AM extremely grateful for your kind sollicitudes concerning my situation: but if your sensibility gave them birth, your reason should have dissipated them, and have led you to discover, in my silence, grounds rather of tranquillity than of fear. I have as yet said nothing of my religious mode of life. Is not this a sufficient proof that, instead of having the effect you attribute to it, I have

thence experienced no painful impressions? In fact, it has occupied my mind but little: for alas! I have spent more time with my friends than in the discharge of my newly-contracted duties. How then, my dear Dormeuille, could you, who are so well acquainted with my character, imagine I was tormented by secret pains, caused by repentance? Naturally frank and communicative, my heart has too much pleasure in declaring to you every feeling it experiences, to be capable of concealment. Do you not know how incapable I am of disguising my sentiments? When I am unhappy, you have observed a thousand times that every thing takes the impression of my sufferings, even my very smile of pleasure. My pen would then in vain attempt to express sentiments of tranquillity and happiness, and the gayest
I could

I could present would, in spite of my endeavours, assume a gloomy air of sadness and of mourning.

Be assured then, my dear friend, the bonds I have voluntarily received afford me no cause of affliction. On the contrary, I find in these peaceful retreats a thousand consolations to my sorrows. My mind grows stronger in the bosom of nature, and my heart indulges in uninterrupted reflections on those I love and esteem.

I confess, however, that when I first entered my cell I experienced a kind of cruel shuddering. The recollection of my misfortunes suddenly returned, and I wept and sighed bitterly at my unhappy lot.—But soon your letters administered the balm of consolation, and I felt how much the sorrow of having lost my friend might be softened by the sweet remem-
D 3 brances

branches he had impressed upon my heart.

Having thus recovered the exercise of my reason sufficiently to view objects in their true colours, my condition began to appear a source of felicity for every wise man, and of consolation for the unfortunate. In fact, what more can be desired than a life of purity and frugality, where, freed from the storms of ambition and the distractions of vanity, we may enjoy, beneath the primitive cloathing of the patriarchs, their ancient innocence and their uninterrupted happiness?

I do not view this condition with a religious eye ; for every virtuous man will ever be worthy the favors of heaven. But I discover in it every thing that can assist the practice of sound philosophy, every thing that
can

can unfold and preserve the most important virtues. In the world, we are carried away, in spite of ourselves, by innumerable corruptions; whereas here we behold nature pure and uncontaminated. Removed from luxury and intemperance, which are the most dangerous sources of vice, we may easily satisfy our few wants; and thus circumscribed within ourselves, and freed from the solicitations of desire, what impure ideas can the mind ever be tempted to indulge? Each vice would perish of itself in solitude, were it possible it could find admission there. Every thing that surrounds the individual gives strength to the love of virtue and to every thing that can add true dignity to man, and, by teaching him to think, shows how many inexhaustible pleasures lie hidden in the secret recesses of the soul. The man who knows how to live ab-

solutely alone, and totally destitute of all communication with his species, would be perfect. He would know no privation, and, like the Grecian sage, he might say, "I carry all I have within me."

Yet I desire not this perfection. I prefer even the torments I suffer to the greatest pleasures, that indifference affords. Friendship is my only good. Alas! I only preserve her blessings moistened with tears, and the more she forces me to weep, the more I love and cherish her delights.

LETTER XXXVII.

OH! My friend, how unaccountable is the human heart! Of all the wonders, the world exhibits, this is the most

most astonishing. How it changes from one moment to another! The fluttering butterfly cannot be more inconstant—a shrivelled leaf is less the sport of the rustling winds.

But what means this preamble? you will say. My friend, you will not easily imagine. During the interval of more than a month, that has elapsed since you heard from me, what strange events have taken place! Listen to my tale, and compassionate the most unfortunate of mankind.

I fondly imagined I had at last found, in this tranquil retreat, that peace, I had so long sought in vain. No longer uneasy concerning the fate of my mother, and happy in a contemplative life, where I might give a free loose to my thoughts, and collect all the grand truths of nature, I often said to myself, “This alone is true happiness;” and I pursued its plea-

tures without reserve. In the intervals between the hours of prayer I retired to my cell, and abandoned myself to the reveries, you know my habit of indulging. What a crowd of ideas successively filled my mind, passing and repassing with extreme rapidity, always in strange disorder and confusion. Made up of the recollection of all I had ever done or thought, the beginning and the end often exchanged places, yet all was interesting. 'Twas a pastime that afforded me a real delight.

I was fond also of recollecting the objects of my early studies. Though not possessed of a single book, the sea having swallowed up every thing I possessed, yet I have scarce lost any part of what I have ever learnt. Thus I felt the advantage of a good education, and the importance of reading few and well-chosen works. A rapid
and

and extensive perusal of books often fatigues the mind, without rendering it productive; whereas a well-selected course of study, accompanied with much reflection, unfolds the intellect naturally and without effort, and renders it rich and fertile, almost without intending it. What a pleasure it was to me to run over in my mind my Homer, my Virgil, my Plutarch, and the charming Rousseau! I always seemed to have them with me, and to be actually conversing with those great men. Yet I recurred most frequently to Rousseau, because, in his sublime and charming thoughts, I found that harmony with nature, which evinces a purity of mind, and that amiable philosophy, which, laying down the truth with a union of strength and sweetness in apparently unstudied language, at once instructs and fascinates the heart.

Such was the manner in which I passed my days. I was not, as you perceive, destitute of pleasure, and I was able to taste sufficiently of variety, to continue all its attractive delights. As you love to hear the minutest particulars that concern your friend, I shall not omit any thing that can interest you.

One day in every week we have liberty to walk in a wood situated behind the monastery, where we are all allowed to converse together. In lieu of joining the other friars, I generally walked alone, and seated myself in a grotto, formed by the hand of nature, in a large mass of grey rock, situated in the farthest recesses of the wood, and forming the limits of the territories belonging to this community. The picturesque form and appearance of this grotto, and the beautiful manner in which it
is

is ornamented within, were particularly pleasing to me. Shells of every form, disposed without order or regularity, are bordered with a beautiful moss, whose verdure add new lustre to their varying hues. Pyrites and Stalactites, in every variety of form, embellish this peaceful retreat with their brilliant chrySTALLISATIONS, and presents innumerable objects of meditation and of pleasure. A luxury of delight almost inebriated me to ecstasy, as I reposed in this favorite grotto, reclining on its mossy floor, and indulging freely in my reveries, while listening to the melancholy murmurs of a rill that filters through the roof, and divides into innumerable chrySTALS all the variegated productions that smiled around me.

My custom of repairing to this spot had attached me to it, and none but myself ever visited it. My soul seemed

ed as it were to reside there, and I regarded it as my peculiar property. Every thing I there beheld constituted my treasure. When I perceived a new plant spring up, I watered it with care, and rejoiced at seeing my little wealth increase. If I discovered a nest of birds in the foliage of a neighbouring bush, or in a hollow among the rocks, I protected them against birds of prey, by concealing them with branches of trees. I carried bread for the young, and watched their growth; and my pleasure increased as they advanced. They were new companions for the poor solitary inhabitant of a cell; and finding in my little domain, liberty, abundance, and hospitality, they continued to be my guests,

“ Nor winged their airy flight away.”

No sovereign ever contemplated his boundless territories with so pure
a plea-

a pleasure, so sweet a delight, as that with which I viewed my plants, my insects, and my birds.

Alas ! why was I not content with this unmixed happiness, the most solid blessing, Nature can afford to man ? A foolish wish has deprived me of it, and I have lost it, perhaps for ever.

You cannot, my dear Dormeuille, foresee what is to follow all this long description. I weary your patience, but I fear to incur your censure, and I am desirous to delay its severity as long as possible. What will my friend say to my weakness ? I tremble to anticipate your reply.—No matter—we ought always to shew ourselves such as we really are. Frankness is the first virtue in the code of friendship.

Walking one day in the neighbourhood of my grotto, and contemplating

plating the beautiful rural cottages, and country houses around, I found my view limited to the eastward by the rocks that terminated the wood. I climbed them with difficulty, and at length gained their summit, where I beheld, in all its extent, the finest prospect the eye of man can behold. Smiling and luxuriant meadows extended to the base of the steep and distant mountains, whose frowning aspect formed an awful contrast to the plain. A range of rising grounds spangled beautifully with field flowers, skirted the gloomy forests, and fertile pastures, and innumerable villages were dispersed around, at small distances from each other; the whole terminating with a view of the sea, whose waves chased each other with melancholy murmurs to the shore.

But the dell at the bottom of the valley pleased me most, because more
within

within the reach of the eye. Great masses scarcely admit more than a general glance at their wild and savage magnificence, while the scenery of a home prospect, solicits minuter examination, and attaches the heart by the interesting pictures it exhibits. My eye reposed with delight on the rich and beautiful verdure, and the flocks that were feeding in tranquillity in the extensive pastures, watered by rivulets of pure and liquid chrystal. These streamlets skirted with their meanders the neighbouring hills, and softly murmuring along their stony bed, among interweaving branches, or silently gliding along the heath, united in a vast lake, in the midst of which is a small island crowned with a rich cluster of trees, presenting to the eye, all the delights of shade and verdure. A little farther is a garden
richly

richly stocked with fruit trees, and a house of simple and ancient architecture. By the tower, at one of the extremities, I imagined it to be a convent, and was confirmed in this opinion, by observing several nuns, dressed in black, come out into the garden. The similarity of their condition to my own, rendered them extremely interesting to me, and my eye pursued them through the various walks, while innumerable reflections and conjectures on their motives for having thus quitted the world, their parents, and their friends for ever, pressed upon my mind. Presently after I saw a crowd of young women, of whose most charming figures I could only snatch a hasty glance, as the rapidity and variety of their motions, did not admit of my fixing my eyes long on any in particular. Some of them
were

were gathering flowers, some amused themselves by pursuing their companions through innumerable winding paths, and some went arm in arm, dancing and singing; while others walked gravely along, and seemed engaged in serious conversation. I viewed with inexpressible delight, this moving picture of youthful gaiety, which exhibited the most uncorrupted innocence in all its purity. But suddenly another train of ideas threw a gloom over my mind. This youthful band, said I, but resembles an aviary of birds, fluttering and murmuring at the slavery that enchains them. Ah! how they seem to delight in a momentary interval of liberty, whose rarity increases its value! Its duration is short, and it is limited by a severe and inexorable regulation. Can pleasure be thus obse-

obsequious? can she come and go at the command of monkish austerity?

One of these young people now separated from her companions, and entered the orchard that lies between the garden and the hill on which I was placed. She took a few turns, and then sat down at the foot of a tree. Her pensive air, her noble and modest mein, attracted my attention, and engrossed my thoughts from every other object. Why, said I, does she thus prefer solitude to the society of her young companions? what secret grief preys upon her mind?—I was lost in a train of reveries, and one gloomy idea was succeeded by another of still darker horror. I immediately began to imagine this young creature was the most unfortunate of women, though ten minutes

minutes had not elapsed since I first beheld her, and all I knew of her was her figure and her dress; for as she sat nearly fronting the convent, I had not yet become acquainted with her features. Do not wonder, my dear friend, at what I tell you. The first want of a tender and feeling heart, when overwhelmed with misfortune, is not to meet the smiles of the happy, but to weep with those who are as wretched as ourselves; because the melancholy ideas they inspire, enable our hearts to expand with sympathy. We even create imaginary distress, when we cannot find the children of misfortune around us. The sight of pleasure shuts up the avenues of sensibility, and encreases our sufferings; but the prospect of grief dilates and consoles our hearts. Such was, doubtless the cause of my reveries; but their impression was so strong,

strong, that I could not repress my desire of seeing the countenance of her who had already excited so lively an interest in my heart. This, however, appeared very difficult to accomplish, as the orchard was surrounded by a very high wall, and there were no other means to see over it, than standing on the rocks where I was situated. Every where else the ground was flat and low. However, I changed my situation, and wandered from one part of the wall to another, pursuing it through all its windings, till at length I perceived a small mount on which I placed myself, exactly opposite to the young person I wished to observe, and at so small a distance from the tree where she sat, that had she spoken I must infallibly have heard her voice. Her face was concealed behind an impenetrable veil, and I long waited in expectation

tion of some favourable moment. She was reading with such profound attention, that she did not even make the slightest motion, till the bell sounded for us to retire, and the Father Abbé, who passed near me, said to me, "Brother, it is time to go in." I obeyed, though not without a secret murmur at the inviolable order.

When I had re-entered my cell, all my thoughts were engrossed by this beautiful votary of solitude.—But, how do you know she was beautiful, you will say?—Dormeuille, you know my fertile imagination. Yes, her figure was constantly before me, contemplating a book, with the most undeviating attention: My curious eye still seemed to run over all the charms of her person, her robe of perfect white, which exhibited so much taste and simplicity, her beautiful hand, her elegant shape, her noble and gracious mien,

mien—but, as my imagination could not be restrained by the veil, it ventured to raise it, and discovered the most beautiful countenance, and sweetest features, the most amiable of her sex could possess. Could this idea be an error? Was it probable any thing common should be found among so many perfections? Such contradictions, 'tis true, sometimes exist, but they are extremely rare. The laws of symmetry and harmony, are preserved in all the works of Nature, particularly in regard to women, in whom every species of beauty, and of deformity, is classed in the most distinct manner. It appears to me, that there is a mode of existence peculiar to each cast of countenance. A fine woman does not dress, or speak, or move, she does not even stick a pin, or tie a ribband like other women. The consciousness of beauty, or that of wanting it, gives
a cha-

a character to each action of her life.

But I pursued this train of consequences still farther. Her unremitting attention to her book, led me to conclude its subject was far from trifling, and I thence inferred, that her mind and understanding were of a superior rank, and that no frivolity could harbour in her bosom. I pleased myself by arguing, that with these qualities, sweetness of temper, and the most amiable sensibility, were congenial.

You will laugh at my chimeras. Had they never been realized, I would also laugh at them.—But, let me finish this dreadful confession.

Every thing I observed in this young lady, awakened a tender interest in my bosom. She even caused in me a more than ordinary dejection; because, added to my own af-

fictions, I felt those by which I imagined her oppressed. Perhaps, said I, she has but lately entered the convent, and this recluse and monotonous life, is ill-suited to her active mind. To live continually under the direction of an austere governess, and pass her days with those, whose characters do not harmonise with her own, and must appear at best but frivolous—To do every thing precisely according to the prescribed rules of the order, and not to taste of pure liberty, even at the moments devoted to its enjoyment; can all this compensate for perpetual banishment from her paternal roof? Ah! no. She deplores the loss of a kind father, and a tender mother. Perhaps, she deplores some friend of her early infancy, whom she saw with each returning day, and in whose bosom she
reposed

reposed all her feelings ; or a brother, whose fondness for so lovely, so beautiful a sister, was proved by all the attentions of the most affectionate attachment. Unfeeling parents ! How can you thus consent to sacrifice all that should be dear to you, to futile prejudices, a thousand times more poisonous to the heart, than they can ever be useful to the mind. Reflect, that whatever your children learn from strangers, without your aid, but weakens those sentiments of which Nature has formed the bonds of family affection, and without which neither virtue nor happiness can exist.

I should never have done, were I to relate all the reveries that sprang from these ideas. Such is the wandering and excursive humour of the solitary mind, that I pursued them

E 2 anew

anew each day, and at night they often interrupted my slumbers. The more I reflected, the more I was convinced of their truth, nor could my self-love admit a belief, that an object so enchanting, was not worthy the love and esteem of the whole world.

In the mean while I was anxious again to behold my female philosopher, and ascertain the truth of my conjectures. But for this I was obliged to wait a week, Oh ! how long and tedious this period appeared ! At length, however, it elapsed, and I hastened to my observatory, almost at the same hour as before. After waiting a few minutes, she again appeared in the garden, walked directly to the orchard, and returning to her former place, at the foot of the tree, resumed the same employment. She was veiled as before ; and, though this cir-

circumstance afflicted me much, the second view of her excited in me a most tender interest, and agitated me with strange emotions. I watched with unrenmitting attention, every motion she made; and when, for a moment, she ceased to read, and seeming to reflect on the contents of her book, looked towards me, I trembled, cast my eyes downwards, and concealed myself by stooping behind the wall. I could not conceive the cause of these fears and trepidations, which to me were entirely new sensations. From time to time I ventured to raise myself, though not quite upright, or endeavoured to distinguish her through the plants that covered the wall. Still she continued intensely bent upon her reading, with the most profound and unremitted attention. The more I observed her, the more I was convinced of the truth of my dreams, and

was delighted to find them verified. One circumstance in particular confirmed the favourable opinion I had formed of her character.

Hearing on a sudden a plaintive bleating, which seemed to come from the extremity of the orchard, exactly opposite to me, she started up, and ran towards the spot from whence it proceeded. Fortunately that spot was very near me, and I could distinctly perceive every thing that passed. She there found a little lamb, limping along, and dragging after it a long branch of hawthorn. The poor animal's leg was covered with blood, and it seemed, by its moans, to be in extreme pain; till her beneficent hand relieved its anguish. It seemed to be consoled by her cares, and turned its head towards its benefactress, in an affecting manner, as if wishing to relate to her all its sufferings.

sufferings. She drew the thorn from the poor little creature's foot, with the utmost gentleness, then led it to a neighbouring fountain, washed its wounds, and gathering some leaves and herbs, bound them on the part with a piece of linen which she tore from her handkerchief. How her compassionate care of this poor lamb affected me! Ah! said I, what a kind heart she possesses! while the emotions she awakened, moistened my eyes with delicious tears. I was animated with a pleasure, an extasy I know not how to describe. Never did I feel such sensations before.

The animal finding himself relieved, licked with expressions of gratitude, the hand that succoured him. I could not take my eyes from this lovely scene, till—the detestable bell again destroyed my happiness; and, full of bitter anguish at its intrusive

orders, I turned my unwilling steps towards the lonely cloister.

I now, for the first time, considered my duty as a burden, and beginning to feel all the torments of repentance, my cell appeared to me a dungeon or a tomb.

To be thus buried and immured at my first expansion into life!—Eternal, indissoluble vows!—Oh! fatal and short-sighted determination!—But how vain are all retrospective regrets! She who gives birth to these feelings, ought rather to prevent their rising in my bosom. Had I not sought an asylum of repose in this sequestered dwelling, should I ever have beheld the object that has destroyed my peace? But I am now more than ever a stranger to the tranquillity I pursued. Every thing is become a source of pain, except—Alas! I know not what I write.

I began

I began to feel so great an internal commotion of contending passions, that I was at a loss to conceive this new labyrinth in which my heart seemed to be involved. A burning heat violently agitated my frame, nor could I continue a moment at rest. My accustomed meditations no longer pleased and soothed me, sleep and repose were fled, and I passed both day and night, in rapidly traversing my little prison. What a contrast between this insupportable agitation, and the sweet absence of care in which my days had hitherto glided on! Yet, the mere sight of a woman has caused this sudden change! Where then is the manly resolution I ought to possess.— Fool that I was! I attempted to become a philosopher, and I find myself but a child. I dared to judge of other men before I was acquainted even with myself.

My thoughts, alas! were now engrossed by the young female, whom I thought so kind, so good, and possessed of every virtue and every charm, although I had not yet even beheld her face. I was satisfied, however, with that which my imagination had pourtrayed. That countenance I seemed continually to behold, while abandoning myself entirely to these thoughts, I sat upon the ground, leaning my head against a stool, and covering my eyes with my hands. How many tears have I not shed in this posture, which seemed most adapted to the overflowings of my heart. I had no one in whose sympathising bosom to repose my cares, and I poured them forth to the idol before whom I prostrated myself.

But, what will my dear friend think of this new weakness? I anticipate the reproaches, your cold reason will dictate to your pen.

“ After

“ After having recently made a vow to devote yourself to a religious and holy life, thus suddenly to fall in love ! and with whom ? with a woman, of whom you have as yet, but obscurely beheld the external form ? Do you even know who she is ? And were she an angel in virtue, and in every perfection, is it possible you should ever be able to speak a single word to her ? For what then can you hope ? ”

For heaven's sake, my dear friend, be more indulgent to the passions of human nature. More irresistible than the most boisterous winds, they fascinate and subdue the heart, and no human force is capable of opposing them. Can he who sleeps in perfect security from the storm, impute blame to the unfortunate wretch who falls a victim to its fury ? Ah no. He will rather bestow on him his compassion.

I resume my story. You will easily imagine I now began to murmur at the laws which held me thus imprisoned. What would I not have given for permission to go out for a single moment? But to wait a whole week appeared impossible. What then must I do? Love rendered me ingenious. I went to the father abbé, and told him that having a violent head-ache, I wished to walk out a little. He replied, that he could not refuse me what appeared so necessary to my health.

What a happiness! I believe I should have embraced the good old monk, but that my gratitude would have excited his suspicions. I therefore thanked him in a moderate manner, and then hastened to my observatory.

Though I was yet a stranger to the pains of love, I soon began to feel them severely. Perfidious urchin!—

The

The cup with which he intoxicates us is always delicious at first, though he soon forces us to swallow the most bitter draughts.

I waited in vain during several hours, but no one appeared. Great God! What misfortunes did I not torture myself by imagining. Sometimes fearing she was ill, I addressed the most fervent prayers to heaven for her recovery, and would have sacrificed half my life to have spared her the slightest pain. Sometimes I imagined she had quitted the convent, and was returned to her family. This idea tormented me still more than the former, for it left me totally destitute of hope. I did not, however, too easily admit the truth of these conjectures, and flattered myself, her absence only proceeded from a rule similar to that of our own monastery, which did not permit us to go out every

every day. "To-morrow, perhaps," said I, "I shall be more fortunate." I returned full of this hope, which somewhat cheered my sadness, and rendered my disappointment less insupportable.

In my way I passed near my favorite grotto, which I entered. But alas! I no longer found that soothing pleasure in solitude, which exists but when the passions are at rest. The birds approached me, and lighted near my feet, as I had accustomed them, but my heart refused them its former interest; for it demanded an object, whose sensibility might answer its tender emotions with mutual attachment.

I re-entered my cell full of affliction, and absorbed in profound melancholy. Alas! my dear friend, how frequently did I reflect on your kindness and compassion. What would I not have given to have had you with
me,

me, and to have told you how wretched I was ! To a heart oppressed with grief how soothing is the balm of confidential friendship !

The next day I repeated my application, under the same pretext, and now I no sooner arrived at the accustomed spot than I perceived—yes, I perceived the most beautiful, the most adorable object all nature can exhibit. She advanced slowly, with a deeply-reflective air, and took her favorite seat under her accustomed tree. I now felt happiness again to dawn upon my soul and thrill through every vein. As it spread throughout my frame, it seemed to revive me, as the dew of heaven re-animates a plant, drooping under a too fervid sun.

“ Do I then again behold thee ?” said I, with transport. “ My fears were all chimerical. Oh ! heaven ! Oh !

protector

protector of the wretched! may she long repose in yonder mansion, and may this tree, of whose shade she is so fond, and where I can behold her without danger, ever continue to be her loved retreat."

Though she still wore her veil, I found in this privation new reason to admire her; for it seemed to indicate an extreme modesty, which enhanced the charms of her beauty. Love is equally ingenious in creating imaginary pleasures as in producing unsubstantial pains. In short, I was convinced she was a perfect beauty, and possessed of every attraction in the most exquisite degree. I considered her as an angel, and loved her with sensations and emotions, I had never before experienced. Never did mortal inspire me with such celestial extasy.

This time she had no book: her sole employment was reflection. Her
thoughts

thoughts seemed to be extremely interesting, for she was profoundly engaged in meditation. She was, however, suddenly roused from them by the little lamb, who had perceived her from a distance, and came running up to its benefactress, renewing its expressions of gratitude. I was pleased with the animal's lively remembrance, which made me love it so tenderly, that had I been near enough, I should have kissed it with transport.

After caressing it with great sweetness, and holding it closely embraced for some minutes, she rose. At that moment I felt extremely agitated; particularly when I perceived that she turned into a path, which brought her very near me. At every step she took, my heart rebounded with joy, and thrilled with the trepidations of fear. My bosom heaved with palpitation, and my lips were unable to articulate

articulate a single word.—But what violent emotion did I feel when—Oh! how can I describe it?—when her veil caught upon a branch, and I saw—yes, I saw the most beautiful, the most adorable of human features.—I then entirely lost the command of myself, and screamed with joy and admiration.—She heard me, turned her eyes towards me, observed my agitation, (she was not above twenty paces from me) made an involuntary movement of surprize, blushed, and returned, with an affrighted air, to the convent.

Ah! What comfort this view administered to my afflicted heart! By degrees I recovered myself. Had my emotion continued, I should have sunk under its violence. When I recovered the use of my reason, I argued thus with myself. “Why so much agitation? How can so sweet
a look

a look affect me more terribly than thunder itself?—Surely my senses are deranged. I interest myself in this young creature, because she seems to possess the most uncommon charms. But why can I not think of her without experiencing so much pain? Is it possible that her approach should have excited such disturbance in my breast? This, then, is that love which, as yet, I have only read of in romances. The ills of lovers hitherto appeared incredible and ridiculous.—Alas! how unjust were my censures, when I attempted to judge of what was totally unknown to me.”

When I re-entered my cell, I locked my door, as if I had been afraid of being seen, or my foolish passion were written in my countenance. Certain that I was then free from interruption, I abandoned myself to all the vehemence of my emotions.

My

My ideas followed each other with a rapidity that prevented my pausing upon any. An inconceivable confusion disturbed my mind. One moment her form floated before my eyes, the next she vanished from my view. Then the tree, the book, the lamb, presented themselves. This perturbation of my thoughts, this strange incoherency of sensation, gave me some uneasiness, and I imagined my poor brain had suffered a fatal revolution. Fortunately, I soon recovered myself, and my ideas became clearer and more fixed. Then I seemed exclusively to behold the object I adored, and felt the soothing pleasure of contemplating her alone. My enthusiasm was now no longer chimerical, since her features were known to me. Can you believe it? They were nearly similar to the picture my imagination had drawn. The same eyes, the same
same

same mouth, the same cast of countenance. Ah! Dormeuille, how adorable is her form! Could you but behold her, even you would not refuse her the tenderest regard. You would no longer be a cold and indifferent philosopher. Her very looks are fascinating, and how attractively amiable is her smile! An angelic sweetness is portrayed in her countenance, and softened by a shade of melancholy that evinces a most tender sensibility of heart. Such a woman cannot love with slight attachment: but who is the mortal that can deserve her heart?

I tasted an inexpressible pleasure in thinking of her, and reflecting on her virtues, on the graceful majesty of her deportment, the elegance of her shape, the charming simplicity of her dress, her beautiful hand, her delicate foot, her clear complexion, varied with a
gentle

gentle glow, with which some hand divine seemed to have adorned it, her fine black eyes, her hair, that curled with enchanting negligence : and when I had completed the enumeration of all her beauties, I repeated it again and again. In this manner I passed the greater part of the night, which was by no means one of the least happy of my life. But of all the delights these thoughts procured me, the most exquisite was—a miracle, you would believe of no one but myself.—You know how fond I always was of drawing, and that it was one of my favourite amusements. During my amorous reveries, I took my pencil from time to time, and endeavoured to pourtray the adorable features that continually presented themselves to my imagination. But I was always disgusted with my performance, because I could not give it all the

the beauty of the original. Once, however, I felt inspired by a sacred transport—a celestial ray illumined my imagination, and I produced upon the paper the true image of her who is the arbitress of my destiny; and, as if some God had guided my hand, I drew that angelic figure so perfectly accurate, that I fell upon my knees before the work of my own hand, absorbed in love and veneration, as if I had been in the presence of the original.

When this first enthusiasm had subsided, I again examined my work, and found the resemblance equally striking. I was myself highly astonished at it, as it had not cost me half an hour's application. Love had, for once, lent me genius and talents.

Ah! how dear this portrait was to my heart. I could not cease to contemplate it—and to declare to it all
that

that I ought to conceal from the whole world. I wrote behind it these words, "Oh how I adore thee," and having hung it on the favorite tree, I hastily withdrew.

I then repaired to my observatory behind the wall, and, waiting for the moment of her appearance, I felt a violent trepidation, which increased whenever I looked towards the tree, while innumerable apprehensions at once oppressed me. Had I been seen by any one, or had any other young person approached the tree before her, I was ruined.— "What effect," said I, "can this portrait produce?—Will she contemplate it with pleasure or indifference?"—What cruel perplexity!—At length she came—but accompanied by one of her youthful friends. What a misfortune! As they advanced how my heart beat—they entered the orchard—
they

they approached the tree—my palpitation became violent—fortunately, her friend stopped to observe a plant, while she approached alone, with downcast eye, and a more reflective air than usual. When she came to the foot of the tree and saw the portrait, what astonishment she seemed to express! At length she looked towards me, and perceived me; for I know not how I had ventured to show myself more openly than before. My emotion seemed forcibly to strike her; she blushed and turned pale alternately, and her eyes became wild.—But when her friend came up to her—Heavens! what was my happiness! when I saw her quickly snatch the picture from the tree, and with an air of mystery put it in her pocket. Her friend was uneasy at her sudden paleness, and enquired the cause; but she seemed to make her an evasive answer,

and they soon after returned to the convent.

I cannot describe to you, my friend, all the happiness I felt at this delicious moment. What I had observed, was highly favourable to my passion; her emotion at beholding the portrait, her hurry to snatch it from the tree, her concealing it from her young companion——Certainly, said I, she cannot then have beheld me with total indifference. Yet how is it possible a single look should produce such an effect?—'Tis true my own heart yielded to as slight an attack; but she—she is an angel, whom to see is to be enamoured with her beauty, and to be fascinated by her charms. But am I, (the most miserable, the most melancholy of mankind) am I formed to be beloved by the most beautiful, the most perfect of all nature's works?—Yet notwithstanding all the reasons that
should

should have convinced me of my error, I could not prevail on myself to disbelieve, what so exquisitely flattered me. No, it was impossible not to prefer a pleasing error to a destructive truth. Doubtless she perceived in my countenance the marks of a tender heart, and the expression of the love she had awakened in me. Perhaps we breathed that sympathy of sentiment, which causes those who feel it, to reciprocate each other's sensations and affections, even at first sight. Ah! were my hopes but true, I should be the happiest of mortals.—But I may at least aspire to be her friend: for though she is the most perfect of womankind and I but a mere man, yet my heart is full of that tenderness and sensibility which alone can love for ever, or form the happiness of the object of our affections.

F 2

Though

Though my heart overflowed with these transporting ideas, this delightful train did not continue long. Happiness, alas! is but the ephemeral phantom of a moment.

My dear friend, I have not seen her since, though more than a week has elapsed. Often have I repaired to my observatory, yet always in vain; and what drives me to despair, she no longer comes out to walk: for I have carefully observed all the young boarders, and I know her person too well not to distinguish her from them all. What then is the cause of this long absence? Why totally abandon a tree that formerly gave her so much pleasure? Is it inconstancy? No, I cannot believe it. Or has the portrait displeased her? Was this gentle declaration of my attachment, in her eyes, a blameworthy indiscretion?—There is no idea, however afflicting, but
comes

comes to torment my mind in this uncertainty.

Oh! my dear Dormeuille, how miserable is my lot! Oh! inexorable fortune! 'Twas not enough to be totally destitute of parents and relations, but, to fill up the measure of wretchedness, I am destined to suffer the most insupportable of all evils, that of loving without the least hope of return.

No, my friend, you cannot imagine to yourself how much misery this fatal passion causes me. I taste not a moment's repose, and I feel my health daily decline.

Adieu my dear friend. You see all my weakness; but you know my extreme sensibility. Grant me at least a little indulgence, a little tenderness. Give me, however, your candid advice, for I have the greatest need of it. My reason seems totally destroyed.

Reflect for your friend on his wretched condition, but do not speak of it to any one.

Once more adieu. I dare not read this letter; a kind of shame prevents me from dwelling on its contents.

LETTER XXXVIII.

WHY is not your advice, my dear Dormeuille, as practicable as it is just? —But it is too late to preach reason to me. Love is become completely my tyrant, and carries me irresistibly away. What human power can resist his omnipotence? Ah! my dear friend, I am now supremely happy—I have seen her—I have spoken to her—She loves me—She has told me
fo

fo—Yes, she has repeated the tender sounds.

But I must pause, that I may relate what I have to communicate with some degree of order.

When I wrote last, I was oppressed by an almost insupportable melancholy. A secret affliction violently agitated me, a burning fever insensibly consumed me, and my very existence became a burthen; for I was deprived of all that could render it happy or supportable. In vain did I seek for objects to divert my afflicted mind from its anguish, which had entirely driven sleep from my pillow. Alas! cried I, in the utmost despair, has she then for ever abandoned her dwelling—and shall I never behold her more?—No one, who has not loved—no one, who has not experienced a similar privation, can conceive the heart-distracting misery I suffered.

One night, after having been tormented by the most horrid dreams, I arose in a state of wildness, and stood at the window, where the freshness of the air, and the gentle rustling of the foliage, somewhat calmed the emotions that disturbed my soul. But a profound dejection still remained, and all my thoughts were on her, who was the cause of my misery. Ah! said I, she, she is now at rest. No passion chafes tranquillity from her breast; peaceful, and undisturbed; because none but the pains of love are truly insupportable. Oh! most beautiful, most adorable of women, may you never feel the pangs that tear my heart asunder. No, I would not even that you should love me as I love, for then you would be wretched like myself; and your peace is more dear to me than my own. Ah! could I remove far from you every care, and
every

every pain. Ah ! could I spare your heart the anguish of a single sigh.

I could not resist the desire of going last night into the orchard. What happiness I promised myself in visiting the favourite tree, in sitting beneath its foliage, in the very spot—Yes, my heart palpitated at the idea.

I passed through the long extended galleries of the monastery, and opened innumerable doors ; then traversing the garden and the wood, I climbed the wall, and at length arrived in the orchard. As I advanced, what was my astonishment when I discovered by the light of the moon, a young female dressed in white, and walking to and fro. At first I could not discover whether it was her, but hiding myself in the shade behind some rose trees and raspberry bushes, I observed her with the greatest anxiety and impatience. — She advanced slowly

F 5

towards

towards me—approached the tree—stopped there—and then looked at it with a stedfast eye.—At length I recognized her figure—Ah! what sensations I experienced? I could scarcely refrain from quitting my hiding place. My heart forced me away—yet my fears again restrained me. I now saw distinctly all her features: the moon, that reflected a silver light on every object, gently illuminated her still softer features, and decorated her beauties with a pallid lustre.—But why does she come out so late? Alas! said I my conjectures were too just. Yes, some secret agony disturbs her mind and drives sweet sleep from her pillow. But hark;—I am near enough to hear her speak, and perhaps I shall learn from her own lips, all the sorrows that afflict her. Yes, 'tis no idle curiosity that prompts me. If I am desirous of knowing the source
of

of her grief, 'tis but with the hope to share, if not alleviate her affliction.

After contemplating the tree for some minutes, she cast her eyes upon the earth and sighing, resumed her usual seat in profound silence, which to my impatient curiosity appeared extremely long. I listened with unremitting attention, scarcely daring to breathe lest I should lose a single word she might utter. If the wind did but agitate the foliage I was in despair. I conjured all nature to be silent, lest any interruption should oppose my tender wishes—At length I heard a deep sigh. “Great God!” said she, “how unfortunate, how wretched am I!” These were ~~were~~ the first words I ever heard her pronounce, and it would be impossible to describe the effect they produced on me. What a soft enchanting voice! What a plaintive tone!—I was at once transported with pleasure and distracted with the bitterest grief.—An

indescribable sympathy made me participate all her various emotions, and every word she uttered penetrated my very soul. To every sigh I sighed responsive; when she cast her pensive eye on the earth, I was unable to raise mine; and when she looked up to heaven for its pitying aid, I united in the imaginary prayer and ejaculation. In short all her sensations were mine, and I seemed animated by the same heart that beat in her bosom.

“Alas!” she resumed, “how pitiable is my lot!—must I then endure every evil at once. Oh! my heart! How many pangs thy sensibility causes me to suffer!—Oh! fatal sensibility—without thee my life would peaceably glide on in uninterrupted felicity, like this serene and tranquil night. How sweetly the soft brilliancy of yon orb soothes my soul!—How her melancholy aspect awakens each tender sentiment, and
inclines

inclines to meditation ! Less dazzling than the sun, the eye may contemplate her lustre without pain : and the innumerable stars that twinkle around her, compose a more magnificent and a more pleasing picture than the unvarying azure of the finest day.

“ This solemn, this awful silence, declares all nature is at rest. I alone, perhaps, am deprived of the benefits of repose. Yet how necessary to my distracted bosom ! Alas ! how I envy the happy indifference of my young companions ! their hearts are awake only to friendship, they are, as yet, insensible to every other care.”—

She then took from her pocket the portrait I had hung upon the tree, and viewed it with tendernefs.—Ah ! my friend, figure to yourself the agitation I felt and the happiness I enjoyed, at this interesting moment.

“ Yes,”

“Yes,” said she, “this is certainly my resemblance. With what exactness he has delineated it! He has deigned then to think of me.—Ah! if he did but love me!—But why should this strange idea take possession of my heart? How is it possible that the mere sight of a man, whom I do not know, should thus agitate me?—Yet there was something in his countenance that affected my sensibility, and caused a continual emotion in my heart. I dare not see him more: my agitation would betray me.—Ah! cruel necessity!”—

These transporting words had so powerful an effect on me, that I could not contain the violence of my joy; and, without reflecting on the danger, I flew to throw myself at her feet.

She screamed with terror, turned pale, and almost fainted away. “Be not alarmed,” said I, seizing her trembling hand, “’tis your friend, your
most

most tender friend."—At length she recovered. But she dared not either speak to me or meet my eyes. "Why these fears?" said I, "am I not he whom you condescend to love? Believe me you are very dear to me; your absence has driven me to despair, and I am only come to appease my grief by the pleasure of at least beholding the scenes, you so often adorn. I have had the happiness of hearing your avowal.—Ah! may our sentiments ever be the same."

She fixed her eyes on me and wept. A tear trickled down her cheek, and I kissed it away with my lips.—"Ah!" said I, hesitating with confusion, "thus, thus let me ever obliterate the traces of your grief." She tried to speak, but love, timidity, and modesty agitated her soul, and the words died away upon her lips.

Her

Her silence afflicted me, and I ventured to tell her so. At length she replied with a feeble and trembling voice, "Have you not already heard too much?" "Ah! yes," answered I with transport, "that single sentence was enough."

I arose and seated myself beside her, half intoxicated with joy and transport. —I seemed no longer to dwell upon the earth.

I could now contemplate her without reserve. Never had she appeared half so beautiful. At every look I discovered in her countenance some delicacy of feature that had hitherto escaped me, or the marks of some sentiment, ever flowing in new and varied expression from her heart. The gentle reflections of the moon encreased the charming freshness of her complexion, and rendered the melancholy of her countenance still more affecting.

What

What an interesting figure! who could have beheld her without emotion? Her eyes almost continually fixed upon the earth, her smile, in which pleasure and fear were contending, the enchanting sound of her voice, the tender accent of every thing she uttered, every circumstance that regarded her, even her name filled me with rapturous delight. She is called Sophia. Ah! what a charming name! Surely there is something celestial in the sound!

When we had continued together some little while, a mutual confidence naturally arose. The hearts of those who love, soon coalesce in every point of union. That sentiment by which they are allied seems to declare, they are formed for each other, and they can no longer refuse the pleasure of mutual communication.

Thus

Thus it was that we gave and received a reciprocation of delight, in talking of our attachment, and of every thing that was interesting to us both. I told her what an irresistible passion she had excited in me from the first moment I beheld her, and that it had totally destroyed my peace. I described the uneasiness her melancholy had caused me, the reveries and afflictions that succeeded, the extasy with which I had delineated her portrait and her charms, and in short, all the emotions she had excited in my breast. This conversation was long, and I often repeated the circumstances that swelled my passion; for I delighted to multiply the expressions that best portrayed my emotions. I then pressed her hand to my bosom, saying with vehemence, "Ah! Sophia, how I love you! Yes, I love you alone, and this is the first time I ever felt this
tender

tender passion. Before I knew you, I thought friendship the primary sentiment of the heart, and I considered the empassioned fondness of lovers, as the delirium of folly. In fact, such it frequently is. But you have taught me, it may sometimes be natural and dignified; and that it is even a too feeble homage for such an union of beauty and virtue. Doubtless you merit infinitely more; but he who could pay you an adoration worthy of your perfections, must be more than man. Ah! Sophia, believe me I feel all the love of which a mortal is susceptible, and which can never be obliterated from this heart, whose sensibility and affection have caused me such cruel pangs.

“ This attachment will mark the destiny of my future life; I am now incapable either of happiness or misery, of pleasure or pain, but through you.

you. If you cease to love me, I shall cease to exist; but if you are as constant as you are lovely, ah! then I shall be the happiest of men. Tell me, then, my charmer, can you always love me?"

She fixed her eyes upon me, smiled, and in a tone of voice, which love rendered still more affecting, "Yes," said she, "I will always love you; I swear it in the presence of him who can read every heart; of him who knows that mine is governed by sentiments of the purest and most constant sympathy."

No language can express all I felt at this extatic moment. To lie at the feet of Sophia, to breathe the same air that kissed her lips, to press her lovely hand to my bosom, and hear her confess she loved me!—Ah! why did not that night continue for ever?

Our

Our happiness made us forget the rapid flight of time, and believing we had but just met, we were astonished at the unwelcome appearance of the dawn. Sophia perceived it first, and exclaimed, "we are ruined!"—"Ah!" replied I, "in such society, my charming Sophia, how is it possible not to forget all nature—to me you are more than the whole universe besides."

But we had no time to lose. 'Twas the hour when the nuns were to go to prayers, and had one of them appeared in the garden—how dreadful would have been our situation! We therefore parted abruptly till the following night, and I hastened to my wall, from whence I could still observe her in safety. There my eyes pursued her till she entered the convent, nor did a single step or motion of her lovely form, escape my observation. Every thing
that

that regarded her, interested me even to emotion. I contemplated the glow of the morning reflected from her robe, to which it gave a faint roseate hue, somewhat resembling the beautiful tint that adorned her lovely cheeks. Before she entered the convent she turned back. It was only to see me once more. Ah! how grateful did I feel for that tender look!

During the first moments that followed this delicious night, I was transported with pleasure. I felt relieved from a heavy burden, and I fancied no one could be so happy as myself. Yet this happiness did not ensure me constant peace, or undisturbed tranquillity. Sometimes it was so extreme as to be converted into pain, merely from excess of pleasure. I paced to and fro with agitation—I spoke with vehemence, my eyes gazed wildly around,

at

at every moment I exclaimed, with admiration, "How beautiful! how lovely! how adorable!" and my emotions were so violent, that I was obliged to sit down to recover my self-command.

Then I felt the most cruel anxiety for the pain my happiness might cost my Sophia. She had told me, that as she had an apartment to herself, no one would perceive her absence, and that she was so beloved by all the nuns, that they suffered her to go out by night as well as by day, so that it was enough if we were not actually seen together. These reasons, though sufficient to quiet my apprehensions, yet did not set my heart at rest. Ah! how could I enjoy the peace of security, when the severest pangs might afflict, her I loved.

The next day was that, appointed for all the monks and nuns to walk out.

out. I repaired to my observatory, but no longer beheld my Sophia alone or in the orchard, but walking in the garden with several other young people. She would not come there alone during the whole day ; because, as we understood each other, she feared we might be observed. How whimsical in their fears are lovers ! from the instant they have declared their passion, they seem to think all the world may read it in their faces.

My first care was to examine by her countenance whether her heart was at ease. She seemed to enjoy the calm repose of happiness, and I tasted without alloy the pleasure of contemplating her beauty.

Had I not known her true motive, I should have suspected her of coquetry; for she possessed the most striking superiority over every thing she approached. Her dress was still more
simple

simple than usual ; though I thought I could discover a more minute attention to its adjustment, and more of those beautiful though fascinating elegances which give taste to the figure, without adding ornament to the dress, or charms to the person ; but which exhibit the picture of beauty with a finer composition and prove that true beauty, “ when unadorned, is then adorned the most.” She exceeded her companions in height, and her grave and majestic air, though destitute of haughtiness, and tempered with sweetness, gave her the appearance of a divinity surrounded by her nymphs, who seemed to approach her with respectful veneration. At a little distance they laughed and danced, and played about, as was natural to their age ; but when they returned to Sophia, and took her arm ; when they

fixed their eyes on her, and listened to her conversation, they unconsciously adopted her serious manner and tone of voice. Their steps became slower, their air less sprightly; and in short, when in her presence, they were totally different from themselves. The virtues of Sophia form a kind of electric atmosphere around her, whose divine influence purifies and transforms every object. With what delight did I contemplate its effect! Oh! Sophia, Sophia! how shall I declare all the praise you merit, all the admiration and love your various excellencies awaken.

When night returned, my happiness was renewed; and though I could not have conceived it possible it should increase, our second interview was thousand times more delicious than the former. We had now no reserve or
restraint,

restraint, and we seemed to have been acquainted for many years. Our love was pure, our hearts seemed spontaneously to unite, and we abandoned ourselves without controul to the expansive overflowings of mutual confidence.

Nothing can charm the mind or fascinate the heart like the reciprocation of that true love, whose sincerity and frankness supersede the desire to please, because they cannot descend to its cold precision ; and because mutual fondness excludes all subordinate considerations. The love which can invent fine-turned phrases and flowing periods is not the affection that springs uncontaminated from the heart.

When I described to Sophia what kind of lovers women in the polite circles of fashion desired, she could scarcely comprehend me. She replied, " Those women then do not wish to

be sincerely loved." "Yes," said I, "'tis they who wish it most; not from the impulse of nature, but merely for the pleasure of showing their power, and exhibiting their slaves. When coquetry renders the heart insensible, the language of sentiment is no longer intelligible; its accents become an empty sound, and nothing but wit can give pleasure. Such women must be amused, but to love or adore them would be a profanation.

"Ah! most adorable Sophia! may we for ever love as Nature prompts the heart—with unreserved frankness, and unerring constancy. The sympathy of sentiment is the first characteristic of love. Let us not *endeavour* to be amiable, and we shall always be lovers." After having long conversed on this subject, Sophia was desirous to know every thing that concerned me; the manner in which I passed my time;
my

my studies, my amusements. "I wish," said she, "to know these particulars, that my imagination may follow you every moment of the day. For when you are absent, all my employment is to think of you."

She asked me what induced me at so early an age to enter on so austere a life. "Ah!" said I, "let us defer a history that would plunge me once more into the bitterness of grief. 'Tis but a moment since I began to taste unmixed happiness. Ah! let me enjoy my felicity without interruption."

We continued together, this night, a shorter time than on the preceding, and we returned early, in order to avoid suspicion. Sophia had gained the confidence of all the nuns of her convent, and therefore enjoyed almost perfect liberty. Yet there was no doubt, but if she abused it, she would be immediately deprived of it

and then what would be my misery ! These arguments were too powerful to be resisted, I therefore submitted without a murmur.

My dear friend, what happiness I now enjoy ! Each night I see my dear Sophia ; each night I drink a thousand pleasures from her animated eyes, and receive a thousand enjoyments from her conversation, of which the remembrance charms away the tedious intervals of absence.

Never do I cease to have her image before me. It accompanies me at all times, and I seem still to be conversing with her. All she has said repasses in my imagination, and appears so full of the charms of good sense, sound judgment, and acute observation, that I am improved by her remarks, and delighted with her uncommon elegance of thought. Oh, Sophia ! how can I describe

describe the innumerable perfections lavished on you by Nature?

I shall see her again to-night. What are the joys of angels to those my Sophia can impart.

LETTER XXXIX.

My dear friend, what agitation I feel while I write this letter ! Never did I experience such a tumult in my breast. How my hand trembles!--I can scarcely guide my pen.

What I am about to communicate will astonish you so much, that were I not to relate all the circumstances, you would not believe it possible.

Oh fatal love ! in what an abyss of wretchedness hast thou plunged me !
—Oh, my Sophia, my Sophia !—I

shudder at the thought.—Alas! how was it possible to foresee it?—Hear my tale, my dear Dormeuille, and pity your unfortunate friend.

You know how tenderly I loved Sophia. Yes, I loved her with all the passion, with all the sensibility, of which my heart was susceptible. She absorbed as it were all the energies of my soul, and fixed my tenderest affections. Sophia was to me the most beautiful, the most lovely, the most adorable object, nature could exhibit among all her works. But this sentiment was as pure as her who excited it; and was so sanctioned by virtue, that I cherished and gave a loose to it in the temple of prayer itself. Sometimes I even dared to speak of my Sophia to the Deity: “Great God!” said I, with enthusiasm, “surely she is the most virtuous of thy creatures,

tures, and deserves, next to thee, to receive the homage of mankind."

I was happy, because I was loved by Sophia. If I received pleasure from seeing her, she was no less rejoiced at the renewal of our interviews. Her eyes declared the truth of this assertion, and she assured me of it in so persuasive and captivating a manner, that those interviews were the most delicious moments of my life. Yet my enjoyments had nothing to render them remarkable to a stranger; and many a cold heart would regard them as perfectly insipid. To us it was enough, that we were together, and sometimes we passed considerable intervals without uttering a word. To lie at the feet of my Sophia, to recline my head upon her knee; sometimes to receive from her lovely hand a gentle squeeze, and view her lovely face, were to me a supreme
G 5 delight.

delight. The most polished eloquence could not have surpassed this expressive silence. Words were formed but to amuse the cold and indifferent; lovers have another language, more varied and energetic, which conveys with more fidelity all the shades of tender passion. The tongue has but one mode of saying, *I love*; but the eyes can vary the same soft assurance with every momentary glance.

These silent interviews were often first interrupted by the charming Sophia. Sometimes she desired me to relate how I passed my time when we were not together; a request with which I complied the more readily, as it was but describing the constant effect of my passion. She perceived by what I said, that not a moment passed but she engrossed my thoughts; and this always procured me a repetition of her caresses, except when I had
been

been idle, and neglected my studies, which she urged me to pursue with assiduity. She even set me a task herself, which I engaged to perform; such as translating passages of the English or Italian poets. I brought my work in the evening, and at the feet of my tutress received her praises or her censures. When I had performed well, a kiss was my reward; otherwise I was threatened with a frown. I took care, however, to render that cruel punishment very rare; and Sophia read my productions with considerable candour and indulgence.

With what ardour did not the hope of pleasing my Sophia inspire me for my studies! With what delight did I not listen to her applause! Her opinion was the more interesting, as she has a cultivated mind, and often makes observations on style, which prove her to possess an exquisite taste. I was

charmed to perceive, my beloved possessed talents so uncommon in her sex; for without these, no attachment can be permanent. So numerous are the charms necessary to feed the insatiable cupidity of love.

Oh, my Sophia! my too lovely Sophia! thy energetic and cultivated mind, thy acute judgement, thy eminent virtue, are worthy of an eternal affection. Alas! notwithstanding the prejudices that oppose our union and condemn our passion, notwithstanding the torments it inflicts on me, I feel that it will continue till I shall cease to exist.

Sometimes, yet very rarely, she permitted me to talk of herself, and I then enumerated her charms with all the impassioned fondness of a lover. The exquisite turn of her features, the gracefulness of her deportment, the goodness of her heart, the elegant polish

polish of her conversation, her extensive knowledge, her matured judgment, her never-failing activity of mind, her extreme sensibility; in short, every feature she possessed, and every syllable she uttered, were alternately the objects of my admiration. I often repeated these remarks, tho' accompanied with that heartfelt tone of tenderness which gives to the same words an unceasing variety of expression. The subject to which I most frequently recurred was her sympathizing care and attention to the little lamb, which had communicated to me so much pleasure. But the modesty of Sophia soon prompted her to interrupt me. She would often smile at these descriptions, and then enumerate a long train of faults, which she declared she possessed; "For," said she, "I must bring you back to reason, when I see you abandoning her dictates.

dictates. 'Tho' your wandering imagination has created a seducing phantom of perfection, 'tis for me to dissipate the illusion, and present myself before you in my true colours, that you may be accustomed to my imperfections, and feel towards me only such sentiments as, being consistent with truth, may be expected to be permanent."

I replied to this severe morality by the tenderest caresses. 'Twas the only manner in which I could prove to my Sophia the truth and sincerity of my passion, notwithstanding the illusory exaggeration of which she accused me.

When I recal to mind those innocent delights, I am melted with the tenderest emotions, and tears of pleasure trickle down my cheek. Alas! why do not these delicious moments last for ever.

The

The last time my unhappy destiny permitted me to enjoy them, I was far, very far from suspecting they were soon to cease. One evanescent trifle had given birth to them, and another trifle destroyed our future hopes. The real source of the most important events, is often insignificant in every thing but its consequences.

Some wild flowers had grown around my grotto, whose simple colouring appeared to me so charming, and their fragrance so delicious, that I made a nosegay of them for Sophia. She received it with kindness, and was desirous of seeing the spot from whence they were gathered. I was pleased and gratified by her wish, and thought it an additional proof of her attachment. But as it was impossible for her to climb the wall, we looked for a more easy passage, and after a short search, discovered, at one of the
extre-

extremities, a breach, covered with hawthorn and brambles, which I easily removed. I then took my Sophia in my arms, and, with this lovely burden arrived at the grotto. She entered it, and examining every corner of it, expressed herself much delighted. The moon, which was at the full, darted directly into this little retreat, and being reflected by the shells, and refracted by the pyrites and stalactites, produced a soft yet brilliant illumination.—“What a charming spot!” said Sophia, “How I love its simplicity, and the coolness of the air we breathe. Let us sit down, the night is not far advanced, and here we may pass a few agreeable moments.”

We seated ourselves on a mossy bench, I had formed, and on which I was accustomed to pursue my meditations. “This,” said I, “is the scene where I passed all my leisure hours

hours before I knew you. Here I lived in perfect solitude—here, deprived of the society of a single being that possessed sensibility, my heart attached itself to the plants I cultivated, and the birds that hovered round me.” —“ Oh! my dear friend,” replied she, with tender emotion, “ how this simplicity of taste charms me! It is a proof of a virtuous heart, the very heart for which mine has always panted. Ah! yes, I am more and more convinced by the similarity of our ideas and tastes that we were formed for each other. Before I loved you,” said she, taking my hand, and gently pressing it to her bosom, “ like you, my heart could fix on nothing but the works of Nature.”

I related to my Sophia the pangs she had caused me, and the tears I had shed on her account in this grotto, where she now made me so happy.

She

She replied with a most lovely smile, "My dear friend, I will endeavour in future to spare you these afflictions."—"That," said I, "will be very easy; you have only to love me always."—"Then," said she, "nothing will be to me a greater pleasure."

The night was now advanced, and, notwithstanding the pleasure of being with my Sophia, I began to be uneasy at her stay within the precincts of our monastery. A presentiment I could not account for, tormented my bosom, and I was the first to urge her departure. She felt the necessity of separating, but as we quitted the grotto, "Ah!" said she, "Allow me for a moment to walk among these fine trees; doubtless you have often enjoyed sweet repose beneath their refreshing shade." When we had taken a few turns in the wood, I reminded her

her of the too urgent reasons for sacrificing our present gratification, to our permanent security."—" Yes, my dear friend," said she, " indeed we must part ; it would be dangerous to continue together any longer, and particularly in this wood. Let us go.— But I see your monastery through the trees ; before I leave you, let me just behold the window of your cell. How sweet it will be to recal its image to my mind, in the long interval when I must bear your absence."—" Ah ! my Sophia !" said I, " all the proofs of your love affect me most tenderly ; but to what dangers do not your wishes expose us ?"—" I only ask," said she, " for one momentary glance."

I obeyed, though I shuddered at the danger. It was surely a secret presentiment of the events that were about to follow. Ah ! my Sophia !
my

my lovely Sophia! thou yieldedst without distrust to the purest sentiments of innocence. Ah! 'tis that very innocence which has ruined us.

Pursuing a vista of thick trees, we approached the building, and Sophia satisfied her curiosity—that fatal curiosity which it was but too natural for her to feel.—Great God! what tears it has already cost us! what still greater anguish awaits our breaking hearts!

As we were about to return, we heard a door open at the end of the walk, and from that door a monk was approaching us.—This sight was a death-blow to me, and Sophia sunk senseless in my arms. We had not a single moment to lose. I covered her with my cloak, whose enormous amplitude was now extremely useful, and hastily carried her to my cell. 'Tis true, I ran the risk of meeting other friars,

friars, but it was the only means of safety left. Fortunately I saw no one, and I saved the innocent, at least for a few moments.

God of all goodness! deign to assist my endeavours to protect her for ever from the rude attacks of misfortune.

I carefully shut myself in, and hastened to revive the unfortunate Sophia. Alas! In what a state did I behold her! Her eyes were closed, and the paleness of death was upon her countenance.

My dear friend, all the afflictions I have ever suffered, are nothing compared with what I felt at this overwhelming moment.

I pressed her to my bosom, and endeavoured to recall her expiring warmth: but, all my endeavours were in vain, and I felt the deepest despair. At length she began to shew signs of
life,

life, and soon after said, in a low and extremely faint voice, and with an accent that proved she had not yet recovered the possession of her senses, "Oh! dear Mother Abbess, forgive me—indeed I was not to blame."

By degrees her reason returned, she opened her eyes, and gazed round her with an air of wildness. "My dear Sophia," said I, in a soft and low voice, "take courage, you are no longer in danger. 'Tis your friend who folds you in his arms. Do you not know me?" She cast her eyes towards me, but made no reply. What an affecting languor! I could no longer restrain my tears; yet they were sweetened by mingling with those of my Sophia.

Our hearts were mutually soothed by thus weeping in unison, and she asked me if any hope was left. I endeavoured to afford her that consolation,

tion, though not a single ray cheered my own breast. I placed her on a seat, and opened my door softly, to observe if any one was in the gallery. Alas ! 'twas the hour for going to prayers, and from that moment there were lanterns in every dormitory till daylight. How could we pass, without being seen. The whole monastery was in motion, every moment I heard some one walking by, and though I constantly watched, in order to seize the first favourable moment, all was in vain, and day appearing, our misfortune was irremediable.

How can I describe our mutual despair!—What could we do? what was to become of us? what innumerable evils crowded upon our minds? 'Twas a dreadful prospect, on which I could not bear to pause. I endeavoured to drive it from my mind, in order to employ all its ener-

gy in consoling my Sophia. What chimeras did I not imagine, to palliate the horror of my situation! At first she would not listen to me; but poured forth tears and lamentations, and abandoned herself to the most violent despair. At length, however, my affectionate expressions and caresses calmed her mind, by softening it with tenderness. I know not how I gained eloquence enough, to represent her new situation in so seducing a light, and persuade her that none could be more adapted to her virtues, or so favourable to her happiness. This conversation, which was too long to be related in a letter, produced a very striking effect upon the mind of Sophia. She folded me in her arms, bathed me with tears, and said with an ardour I had never witnessed before, "Oh! my friend, you are the most virtuous of men, I adore your worth,
and

and trust to your protection to preserve the sacred deposit of your Sophia's honour." She took my hand, knelt down, and made me do the same; then raising her eyes to heaven, "Oh my God," said she, in a low voice, "thou who readest every heart, and knowest our innocence, what crime can we commit in living together? Thou hast given us a heart of sensibility, and we love each other; we also love virtue. Ah! protect the tender bond by which we are united, and which will ever retain its unalterable purity."

There was something heavenly in her countenance, that at once gained my assent, and made me adopt the chimerical idea of security, in which I had lulled her fears.

"My adorable Sophia," said I, "if the most sincere, the most tender,

the most constant love, can fulfil the wishes of your heart, be assured that in this peaceful retreat nothing can be wanting to your happiness." She answered with confidence, " He whom I love has a virtuous heart, and I have no uneasiness concerning my future lot. Could I pass my life with you, and be unknown to the whole world beside, I should have no other wish to gratify. But how can I reflect on the causes that may discover us, without shuddering at our danger, and then, what will become of you, my dear friend? 'Tis not for myself I fear."

I said every thing I thought adapted to pacify her uneasiness, and assured her, no one ever entered our cells, not even the domestics, and that they served our provisions through a hole made for that purpose in the wall
of

of our antichamber *. — “ Come,” said she, “ let us drive away all melancholy thoughts, and I shall taste, without alloy, the happiness of living with the only object of my wishes—But, my, dear friend, let us be ever faithful to virtue, for, without that, there can be no happiness upon earth.

“ Above all,” said she, “ Ah ! supply the place of my dear mother—and—” the violent palpitation of her bosom, deprived her of the power of finishing the sentence. My imagination readily subjoined the word *father*. Alas ! I was mistaken. “ Yes my Sophia,” said I, “ you will find in the love I bear you, (the purest that ever warmed the breast of man) a firm protection to your honour, and all the consolation you stand in need of. Yes, we will console each other

* The cell of a Carthusian Monk, consists of several divisions.

for the misfortune of being thus separated for ever from our parents.

She knew not then all the force of these words, nor was I acquainted with the afflictions of her heart. There was a kind of reserve and restraint in our emotions, not unusual between lovers. Alas! our hearts were too much in unison, and Nature gave them a secret presentiment of the real ties that so closely united them. But we attributed to love alone our tender affection.

Thus passed this first day. At the fatal hour when we had met the preceding evening in the orchard, Sophia sighed, fixed her eyes upon me, and wept. I had great difficulty to divert her from the afflicting remembrance that oppressed her, and I perceived by her countenance, how much her modesty revolted at the idea of unavoidably passing the night with a man. On
this

this subject, however, I satisfied her, by observing, that it was our custom to spend almost the whole night in the church. "That will be the time," said I, "for you to take your rest; and as for me I will sleep in a chair, or on a bed I will contrive to make with my cloaths.

With this she was somewhat calmed, and, at my sollicitation, consented to take some repose. I then attended divine service, which, having omitted the preceding evening, a second absence might have given rise to enquiries after my health, that might have been fatal to us.

At my return Sophia was asleep. She had passed the preceding night, and the whole day, in the cruelest agitation, which had so exhausted her strength, that sleep at length triumphed over her affliction. What a charming, what a heavenly figure! Yet her

unparalleled beauty was softened by an impression of grief that pierced my very soul. Her breath was short and unequal, and sometimes she moved her head and arms, in a manner that proved how little her mind was at peace. Soon afterwards she awoke, and perceiving, for the first time, a man by her bed-side, she was seized with sudden alarm; but at length she recovered from her fears, and seemed to have benefited by repose.

To her new situation she could not reconcile herself so suddenly, and notwithstanding her endeavours to conceal from me what she suffered, by an appearance of tranquillity, I could plainly discover her uneasiness. Alas! what pains did I not employ to console her under the weight of her afflictions! I observed her, with anxious minuteness, to discover the cause of her uneasiness, and employed the tenderest

derest expressions and most delicate attentions love could suggest, to sooth her. I endeavoured to divert her sorrowful thoughts by displaying to her mind all the pleasures we might enjoy in the purest and most sacred union. "What can be more delightful," said I, "than to be continually in the presence of the object we love, without interruption or privation, far from a corrupt world, where innumerable prejudices abrogate the most sacred laws of friendship, and the mask of virtue is used as a means of rendering imposture successful? My Sophia, if we do but love each other, if our happiness depends on the reciprocations of sentiment, the most limited space will to us be a boundless universe, and we shall adorn it with every thing desirable in nature, by enriching it with

the most tender love and the closest friendship."

She united in all these marks of affection, and I had even the pleasure sometimes to behold a smile enliven her languishing features. Yet her accustomed melancholy soon returned, and it was necessary to renew my contest with its baneful power. When we were together, Sophia could conquer it, but when my duties called me away, I found her cheeks, on my return, always pale, and her eyes swelled and inflamed with weeping. I perceived, that besides the concern arising from her present situation, she had some other internal affliction, of greater weight and more exquisite sensibility. It might have been easy to have learned its cause, had it not been my only wish to chase all melancholy thoughts from her mind.

Alas!

Alas ! 'tis this delicacy that has undone me, and I am the victim of the tender sentiments that reign within my breast.

These contests, at once productive of pain and pleasure, continued during some days. At length she became calmer, and her health, which had suffered from continual grief, returned. The roses that bloomed upon her cheek again revived and expanded, her eyes renewed their lustre, and the amiable and chaste Sophia, convinced her virtue was not in danger of a fall, experienced no longer the torments of continual fear. Ah ! how delicious was the change to my aching heart.

Encouraged by this happy effect of my cares, I took pleasure in multiplying them with increasing delicacy and tenderness. Our condition now appeared supremely blest. I was unable to imagine a more enchant-

ing felicity, and all my prayers were that it might endure for ever.

From the moment when I beheld my Sophia rise at early dawn, more beautiful and lovely than Aurora herself, to the close of the day, when we were obliged to separate, I tasted the inexpressible pleasure of her society. I loved without the least fear of interruption or separation, for it was already a week since we had been together, and there was no appearance of discovery or danger.

I have often heard it said, that Love feeds on contradictions and sorrows, and that he expires as soon as he enjoys continual and unalloyed pleasure. This can only be true of those lovers who pursue an illusive happiness. As long as they view their chimeras but with the rapid glance of the unob-servant passenger, they are delighted with fancied excellencies ; but as soon

as they approach too near, they are astonished at having so long lavished their affections on such undeserving objects. Not so the lovers, whom reason unites in sympathy of soul and similarity of character, whose thoughts are in constant unison, who love more tenderly as they become more intimately acquainted, and who receive from each other all the intellectual pleasures and enjoyments they are capable of tasting. Yes, I embraced happiness itself when I held my Sophia in my arms, or pressed her lovely hand to my bosom: when, conversing in gentle whispers to avoid notice, I insensibly approached her lips, or felt the soft breath of her mouth upon my cheek. Sometimes I even dared to kiss her, though Sophia rarely permitted so great a favor; and its privation was the more easy to inflict, as her presence inspired

me with an invincible timidity, and the slightest look was to me an absolute command. To her wishes alone I listened, and for her satisfaction would have risked throwing the universe into confusion. But this absolute submission to her will arose from my knowledge of her wisdom and her virtues. To her I left the guardianship of our happiness, because she best knew how to fulfil the important charge.

Ever attentive to render our happiness permanent, and fearing that a life of uniformity might become fatal to our love, Sophia gave it all the charms of variety. I continued to pursue my studies, which she regulated and participated. In these, though she always surpassed me, I was never jealous of her superiority. If I related to her some fact of history, repeated some strain of eloquence, or explained

explained some discovery of philosophy, her judicious observations proved, she had much better studied and conceived the author, and thus she at once astonished and informed me. Sometimes I extracted a passage from Petrarch or Tasso, which we both translated. But what a difference did our performances exhibit! She seized all the beauties of the original with an infallible fidelity, and adopted them in her translation with additional elegance, always preserving the graces and sentiments of the original. The study of her charming productions improved my own, and I enjoyed her superior excellence with exquisite delight. My very existence was so closely united with that of my Sophia, that her various perfections produced the same effect as if they had been my own. My whole soul but breathed, as it were, in her's.

At

At other times we varied our amusements with drawing. She painted several of the most picturesque and charming views we could discover from my window, and with her pictures I embellished our happy, peaceful retreat.

At another time she drew my portrait. "I will try," said she, "whether Love will bestow as much genius and talent on me as on you." "That is impossible," cried I. "What could he add to all the endowments you have received from nature? Ah! Sophia! should all the powers of heaven combine, they could never form a beauty that could compare with yours."

She smiled at my enthusiasm, and took her pencil. Her lovely hand, equally skilful and charming, executed the work in a moment, and produced a most accurate resemblance. It was
added

added to the other pictures, and hung by the side of that of Sophia. With what pleasure did we behold our labours ! Often did we melt into delicious tears, when contemplating these drawings, and reflecting on the ideas they revived.

Forgive me, my dear Dormeuille, if I am tedious on this interesting subject. Alas ! the unfortunate have no other resource but perpetually to recur to their past happiness. Ah ! how can they tear themselves from the sweet remembrance ?

Oh, my charming Sophia ! whither are our happy moments fled ? Those moments, when we might without fear or restraint abandon ourselves to all the sympathies of love ; when the pure and delicious pleasure of beholding you made our days glide too rapidly away, and converted our frugal meals into festivals of enjoyment.

Oh !

Oh ! delights of innocence ! Oh ! luxurious frugality of the golden age, whither are ye departed ?

Thus did we pass two months in uninterrupted happiness, when this enchanting dream, like the vapour of the hills, vanished in a moment. Never will the events of that fatal day be effaced from my imagination, when my imprudent passion made me forget the sacred duties, Sophia herself had imposed on me. The idea haunts me without intermission, and each reflection but renews my torture.

One morning, when I returned from prayers, Sophia had just awakened from her slumbers, and appeared a thousand times more fascinating than I had ever beheld her. Her eyes sparkled with heavenly fire, and were still more animated by the lively carnation of her cheeks, and the lovely smile that sported on her lips ; that
lovely

lovely and enchanting smile, which is at once the child and parent of pleasure : “ I have been dreaming of you,” said she, in a more impassioned tone of voice and manner than she had ever addressed me before ; “ your image has disturbed my sleep, and your expressions of tenderness made me feel the happiness afforded by mutual love.” Strongly affected by these words, agitated by a strange emotion I am incapable of describing, and seduced by the most fascinating, the most irresistible attractions, my lips seemed spontaneously to unite with those of my Sophia. Ah ! what a delirium of joy ! what an intoxication of pleasure ! I forgot all Nature but the angel, the divinity I embraced, and seemed transported to the heaven of heavens in her arms.

But soon I beheld my lovely Sophia with more anxious solicitude.
She

She wept, she dared not even raise her eyes to meet mine. I endeavoured to console her by assuring her that I alone was criminal, and that if she had yielded to passion, her mind at least was innocent. She conjured me to be silent, hid her face with both her hands, and shed a torrent of tears. This sight tortured my very soul. At length she drew from her pocket a gold box, on which she long fixed her eyes with a smile of bitterness, and then in a tone of the profoundest affliction sighed out, "Oh, my mother!"

The sight of this box, in spite of all my firmness, threw me into a violent palpitation; for which, however, I could discover no reason, though I endeavoured to pacify and conceal my emotion in the presence of Sophia. Throwing myself at her feet; I exclaimed, "Oh, my Sophia! what torments your affliction makes me endure!"

Alas!

Alas ! I wished to make you happy, I had no desires but those which seemed to animate your own bosom, till a moment of weakness has undone me, and I have become a source of misery to you, instead of happiness. Ah ! 'tis impossible you should ever love me more ; and nothing remains for me but to resign my existence, and take refuge in the tranquillity of the grave.

She was affected with my despair, and her angelic soul forgot her own sorrows, to think alone of those under which she beheld me sinking.

“ I cease to love you ! ” said she, with softness, “ Oh ! 'tis impossible ! ”
 “ Ah ! if you love me still,” said I,
 “ dispel, I conjure you, the deep despair, your countenance betrays. Are you not still my Sophia ?—Are you not still the loveliest and tenderest of women ? Do you not still feel that
 angelic

angelic goodness in your bosom, whose characteristic softness beams through all your person? Can a single spot destroy all the lustre of virtue, and rob it of all its purity?" "I believe," said she, "I have ever possessed some goodness, and sensibility of heart; but, alas! can these qualities, which are indispensable duties, and scarce merit the name of virtues, obliterate my crime?"

"Oh! my God!" said she, "I have committed a dreadful sin; but I was at least innocent of any evil intention, and never will repeat the offence. Oh! grant thy forgiveness to the inexperience of an unfortunate penitent, who will endeavour to appease thy just displeasure by a life of rectitude and virtue.

"My friend," she added, "our crime is great, but God knows the weakness of our nature, and perhaps

we may atone for it by a pure and spotless life. Let us then forget the past; and may a course of undeviating virtue efface the dreadful remembrance from our hearts."

A chaste embrace sealed the sacred engagement, ever to respect the boundaries of virtue, and then our tranquillity returned.

I now enquired, "What might be the contents of the gold casket, to which she seemed so particularly attached, and which she had so constantly concealed ever since we had lived together?" "It contains," said she "an important secret. I have concealed it from you till this moment, because I would not disturb the tranquillity you seemed to enjoy by melancholy tales. But 'tis no longer in my power to hide the mystery; and I must communicate to you all my misfortunes."

She

She opened it—Oh! how I shudder at the thought!—it contained—yes, it contained—a medallion—precisely similar to that I wear.

At the sight of this medallion, which was to me more dreadful than thunder,—I sank senseless on the floor.

When I began to recover, I perceived Sophia by my side, holding a smelling-bottle to me, herself deeply agitated and afflicted at my situation.

When my powers returned, I once more fixed my eyes on the picture, and became certain, I was not deceived. The form and size, the mysterious cypher, every thing proved that the lovely the tender Sophia was—my sister!

The first idea this excited in me, after my recovery, was that of the most exquisite delight; for my mind was then engrossed by the pleasure of having found my sister. Ah! my dear friend,

friend, forgive this transport. This sentiment rendered me inaccessible to every other reflection. A thousand times I tenderly embraced my Sophia, a thousand times I pressed her to my bosom, without uttering a single word.

Sophia beheld me with astonishment. At length, somewhat more tranquil, "Ah!" said I, "my Sophia, you will presently know what gives me so much happiness."

As I uttered these words, I took from my bosom the medallion I wore, and presented it to Sophia. Ah! how shall I describe her emotions, which were equally ardent with my own. Again I embraced her, and pressed her to my bosom, calling her by the tender name of sister. She called me her dear, dear brother, and our tears mingled upon our cheeks.

Ah!

Ah! what delicious tears! the first offspring of fraternal love!

But soon the most dreadful reflections assailed our minds and destroyed on all our happiness, when we reflected the dreadful crime we had committed!—How could we depict to our imaginations all its complicated horror?—I was thunderstruck with the thought—my eyes were rivetted to the ground, and my limbs, petrified with terror, refused to support me.—I dared not raise my eyes, lest they should meet Sophia's.—Alas! how could I behold her, who was at once my mistress, my wife, and—my sister!

This depression continued several hours; a period during which I was insensible to every thing that passed around me. Again the image of my Sophia returned full upon my mind, and the pain her sufferings caused me,
awakened

awakened me from my lethargy. At length I ventured to look round. At first, not finding her, I was in the utmost alarm, till I observed her lying on the floor, her head reclined on the bed, pale, senseless and without motion, and veiled in the folds of the curtain.

Tremblingly I approached her—and endeavoured to speak—but in vain—and she was equally unable to hear as I to articulate.

We continued long speechless. For a considerable time I scarcely dared to take the hand of Sophia, and then their mutual pressure was the only language we employed to communicate the tender emotions of our hearts. By turns feeble and timid, or animated and strong, tender or energetic, they imparted the delight of a union so long desired, but combated by the dreadful consciousness of our crime, to

which this discovery had given a still deeper horror. 'Twas a language that impressed me with a lively picture of every thing my Sophia felt, and my heart answered responsive to her emotions in the same expressive manner. I endeavoured to overcome her grief by the soothing solitudes of friendship, and at length, after innumerable fruitless attempts, I had the happiness to succeed. The amiable Sophia, by degrees, recovered her tranquillity. At first she ventured to turn towards me, then raised her eyes to behold me, | smiled at me, and no longer rejected my caresses.

At length love triumphed over every other sentiment, and when I beheld my Sophia's lovely countenance I became less impressed with my crime; while the tranquillity she seemed to have recovered relieved me from a depressive weight of grief.

“ Alas!”

"Alas!" said I, "but a moment ago we consoled ourselves for our criminality by our resolution to atone for it by a life of strict virtue: Can it then have changed its nature by this discovery? 'Tis true we have committed a crime without intending it, and therefore we were not guilty of all its atrocity. 'Twas rather a misfortune, which it was impossible for us to avoid, since we were not acquainted with each other's history. Let us then, though without impiously denying our criminality, endeavour to obliterate its horror, and enjoy the consolations held out to us by heaven."

Sophia was too much abashed and confused to reply, but I could perceive by her eyes that her soul was at rest, though modesty forbid the confession.

The reflection, however, that I was her brother, sometimes triumphed

over every reserve, and she spoke to me with frankness of our unfortunate condition. I endeavoured to prolong these conversations, in order to chase from our thoughts every sentiment foreign to this mutually interesting subject. She requested me to relate to her minutely all I knew relative to our birth, and every thing that had happened to me from my infancy. I complied, and communicated all I had hitherto discovered ; and you will readily conceive, my friend, how lively an interest she took in the narration. With what attention she listened to the tale ! With what sensibility she participated the pleasures and pains I had experienced ! She transported herself, as it were, to the time and place I described, and was equally affected by them with myself. She was extremely gratified with my endeavours to discover her and my mother ; but
when

when she heard that I had enjoyed the happiness of beholding that angelic woman, ah! how can I paint her emotions! Embracing me in the tenderest manner, "Oh! my dear brother," said she, "have you then indeed seen my mother? Say, is she happy?" I thought it wrong to shock her acute sensibility, which had already suffered too much, and therefore told her she was—happy. Alas! when I pronounced that word, what anguish did I feel!—But Sophia fortunately did not perceive my uneasiness.

It was necessary also to conceal from her the motives that induced me to enter on a religious life. I assured her, that grief at not being able to find my sister, and my forlorn and insulated existence in the world, were the only causes of my forming that resolution.

I wished, in my turn, to know the history of Sophia, and she replied to my enquiries as follows.

“ I have very little to inform you of. At first, like you, educated in a village, and afterwards shut up in a convent till the moment when our acquaintance commenced, I have had little opportunity to know any thing of the world. I have only lived with pious nuns and abbeſſes, and a few young persons who were boarded at the convent, and who all love me affectionately.

“ Alas ! I am too unworthy of their esteem. But my heart is innocent, and this is all the consolation I enjoy.

My childhood passed without much pain or pleasure, and equally unagitated by sorrow or desire. Fortunately I received from Nature a happy and contented disposition, and while I submitted

submitted to the employments imposed on me, and learned what I was desired to learn, the pleasure of walking in the garden, and talking and laughing with my young companions, was sufficient to render me completely happy. But when the increasing sensibility of my heart began to unfold, and exhibited objects under new points of view, the amusements of childhood no longer delighted me, and I began to reflect. Then, whatever surrounded me, excited my mind to action, and interested my feelings, and the works of Nature imparted new pleasure to my heart. The flowers that adorned our garden, the trees that shaded me with their friendly foliage, the birds that flew above my head, the animals that shared my careffes, all communicated a sensation hitherto unknown.

When my reason became more matured, this general affection, which at first extended to every object, attached itself more particularly to an abbess who had the charge of my education, and was entrusted with the secret of my birth. Though she was a woman advanced in years, her extreme kindness, her uncommon good sense, the sweetness of her disposition, and her amiable temper, made me forget the difference of our ages. I felt a sincere affection for her, and often quitted my companions for her society, because with her I found a source of pleasure more equal and more suited to my taste, and her conversation delighted me the more, as she always said precisely as much on every subject as could inform or interest me. I sat by her with my work, and while we employed ourselves in sewing, she would relate stories

stories which conveyed a pure and instructive moral, or pointed out the advantages of the solitary life to which I was condemned. One day, without reflecting on the consequences, she told me the history of a young man, who had suffered great misfortunes because he had quitted his parents, who lived in a village in peaceful and happy obscurity. After weeping bitterly at this affecting story, I asked her why I was not suffered to remain with my parents. This question embarrassed her. She perceived her indiscretion when it was too late, and her evasive reply only increased my curiosity. From that time my desire to know my relations increased continually, and at length occupied all my thoughts. My young companions sometimes went to pass several days with their families, and,

at their return, all their conversation was the pleasure and happiness they had enjoyed. My God ! said I, when will it be my turn to taste these delightful enjoyments ? Does not my mother love me ? Alas ! I know her not. Ah ! my dear mother, how happy should I be, had I but the power to return your love !

“ These reflections, which I always made to my good mamma, (for so I always called the mother abbess) affected her, and she embraced me with tears. This was a new cause of astonishment to me, and I continually tormented her with innumerable questions, which she never satisfied.

“ When my understanding was more matured, and mamma thought she might speak to me on this interesting subject without danger, she declared the horrid secret of our birth, and confided to me the casket
you

you now see, together with the medallion it contains. My God! what floods of tears I shed at this affecting tale!

“ From that moment a fixed melancholy has taken possession of my mind. The idea that I should never behold my mother and my brother rendered me extremely unhappy. Heaven has at length taken pity on my affliction, and has discovered to me my brother; but alas!——”

“ My dear sister,” said I, embracing her, “ let us think no more of our misfortunes: we are the involuntary cause of them ourselves; but our hearts are virtuous, and shall ever continue so.”

Our fraternal affection restored peace to our minds, and for a time insured its continuance. We resumed our studies, our translations, our philosophical conversations, and our draw-

ing, to which natural history was now added. I brought her shells from my grotto and plants from the hills within the territory of the monastery. I told her their names, and explained their structure, and our days passed in the happiest occupations. Often she made me repeat the history of my youth, and enter into the minutest details, or describe the slightest sensations I had experienced, assuring me, every thing that concerned me, was interesting to her.

You will readily conceive the friendship of my dear Dormeuille made no trifling figure in these conversations. Ah! 'twas one of our most interesting and most pleasing topics. I cannot describe to you the delight my Sophia took in talking of you. Every day we read some of your letters together, nor did we ever finish them without tears of pleasure.

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The subject to which she most frequently recurred was my journey to Clermont. Every thing that related to our worthy mother was extremely interesting to the good, the tender Sophia. When I described the countenances and tempers of the children, she almost fancied herself among them, and longed to embrace them. She would often ask me, with tears, whether Madame de Clermont ever thought of her daughter. "Ah, Sophia," replied I, "how is it possible she should not think of you constantly?"

Thus passed our days, in mingling our mutual griefs and pleasures, our thoughts and feelings, and all the little attentions that are dictated by fraternal love. Ah! my friend, how delightful is that affection when pure and exempt from envy. 'Tis the first sentiment of which nature has rendered man susceptible; to teach him,

him, from his earliest infancy, that our greatest happiness is friendship.

I have always had a bad opinion of brothers who do not love each other. 'Tis an affection which can only be extinguished by the growth of vicious passions.

Had this mode of life continued without interruption or change, we should then have known true and permanent felicity. No pleasures can be compared with the enjoyments that continually occupied our moments: They were pure, they were heavenly; and if Sophia received a kiss in the midst of our employments or conversations, 'twas always the kiss of pure fraternal love. But alas! this enchanting phantom of happiness soon vanished, and I am destined never to taste of any durable enjoyment. Scarcely from the moment of my birth have affliction and sorrow ever
quitted

quitted me, nor do I doubt they will pursue me to the grave.

My Sophia, my amiable Sophia, began to be restored to happiness, and I was satisfied with my condition. Only at the intervals when I was obliged to quit her, I felt a secret uneasiness at the greatness of our danger. But in her presence every dismal idea vanished, and I only felt the most exquisite, the most unalloyed pleasure.

One day I observed her more melancholy than usual, but attributing it to some passing reflection, I endeavoured rather to divert her thoughts than to discover the cause of her dejection, which, however, increased daily, and at length became extreme. One morning I found her in tears, and unable to answer me but in sobs, which, however, she struggled to suppress. Whence could this sudden change

change arise? Alas! a croud of horrid images pressed upon my imagination. At length I learnt the dreadful secret, that my Sophia would in a few months become a mother!—

'Tis impossible either to describe or to conceive the shock this fatal news produced on my whole frame.

For a long time I sat motionless and unable to speak, insensible to every thing but the stifled sobs of her whom I scarcely dare to name.

Great God! to what misfortunes am I still destined. To find the most dreadful torments in the tender sentiment from which happiness most spontaneously arises! in paternal love itself! Great God! what a complication of misery!

This, alas! was a fatal blow to all our hopes. How was it possible to save ourselves from so great a danger? What was to become of our unfortunate

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nate offspring, or of the lovely and tender Sophia herself?—Ah! why should the most amiable of human beings perish, a victim to a momentary error?

Sophia was equally convinced with myself, that our destruction was inevitable; and it was now impossible to calm her despair. Two months have we continued in this state of anxiety and horror, which it is impossible to pourtray. The time will come when we shall live in daily expectation of the dreadful event—an event I cannot think of without shuddering. Yet we are destined to bear these terrors during several months to come. What an age of misery!—yet how short a period! Thus are all our days embittered, thus are they marked by misfortune and despair. Great God! perhaps that period will terminate our tender union;—perhaps we shall be separated for ever—consigned to unfeeling

feeling judges!—Ah, my Sophia, must I then be the cause of thy destruction—I! thy brother, thy friend?—

Adieu, my dear Dormeuille. Expect to hear some dreadful news. Ah? my good friend, what pains do I not cause you! Yes, 'tis pity you ever knew me.

LETTER XL.

'Tis now two years, my dear Dormeuille, since I have been able to write to you. You must have suffered great anxiety for me, and I have shared your uneasiness. But the most insurmountable obstacles have rendered my silence unavoidable. It requires the greatest precaution to convey my letters
to

to you : and the man to whom I consigned them being dead, it demanded considerable time to gain the confidence of his successor.

I anticipate the objects of your enquiry, and you shall be satisfied. What a history I have to relate to you ! But do not communicate them even to Leonora. She would perhaps believe me criminal, when in fact I am but unfortunate.

At the time when you received my last, I was in a state, my pen is unequal to pourtray. The most distracting anxiety tormented me day and night, leaving me not a moment's repose. Yet I was constrained to appear at ease, in order to relieve Sophia of part of her affliction. Alas ! I held out to her the soothing picture of hope, while despair filled all the recesses of my soul. My attention and solicitude, alas ! produced but little effect. She
replied

replied not to my reasonings, and continued whole hours with her eyes fixed on the ground, or weeping bitterly. Thus had I not only to endure my own affliction, but to console the despairing Sophia; which was far the most arduous trial of my fortitude. Her health visibly and daily declined; her cheeks grew pale with continual weeping; her eyes lost their enchanting vivacity; a settled melancholy obscured them; and the paleness of death characterized all her features.—And to me alone she owed all this agonizing wretchedness.

Our misfortunes were now at their summit; for even the communications of sympathy were denied. Sophia passed her days and nights in tears, and the anguish I felt was such, that to me death would have been a welcome relief, had I not feared to leave my Sophia destitute. For I possessed not
fortitude

fortitude equal to supporting her heart-rending afflictions.

I had no interval to give vent to my grief, except when I was obliged to attend divine Service; and on these occasions I unburdened my soul of all its accumulated sufferings. This was generally in the night; and the obscurity of the building, the mournful hymns of the other friars, and the dismal ideas arising from the solitude in which I had left Sophia, every thing swelled the tide of sorrow, to which I could then abandon myself without observation or controul.

The important period was now advancing with rapid strides, and we had already entered the last month, the commencement of which chilled me with horror. I endeavoured however to suppress my anguish, that I might render my too unfortunate Sophia all
the

the assistance she needed, and which she could only receive from me. I was now about to be called to the discharge of the most important of duties, for which it was necessary I should qualify myself. With this alone I was fully employed. Alas ! how could I without horror contemplate the danger to which she would soon be exposed ? How could that delicate form, which affliction and despair had almost exhausted, support the cruel pains she was about to undergo, with no other assistance than mine ? I endeavoured to strengthen my fortitude and courage, and even confirmed it with some illusory reflections. In misfortune, the most powerful remedy is a conviction that we are able to extricate ourselves from our difficulties.

You remember that physic and surgery, particularly anatomy, were always my favourite studies. Hitherto they

they had only formed my amusements: I had then no idea of the important benefit and utility I should one day derive from them. I endeavoured to recollect all I had once learned relative to these sciences, and particularly every thing applicable to this important occasion. All this I arranged in my mind, and constantly reflected on it, endeavouring to foresee every accident, and to remember the means of preventing the evil consequences that might follow. What phantoms did I not pursue? I was in want of every thing, yet I imagined that I possessed all the knowledge I required, and persuaded myself that, aided by Nature, my small acquirements were sufficient. Yet this confidence, perhaps, ought not to be entirely attributed to too elevated an opinion of my abilities. It arose wholly from a desire to repair the
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the misfortune I had caused ; and hence I placed all my hopes in the success of this undertaking, and constantly drove from my mind every thing that could diminish my confidence. 'Tis true, this was an error ; but to that error I owed a degree of fortitude highly beneficial to us both. What efforts do not love and friendship enable us to perform !

Thus encouraged by hope, I looked forward with less apprehension and terror to the approaching event. At length the dreadful moment arrived. " 'Tis now the time," said I, " to render myself worthy of the tender name of father, and to expiate an involuntary error by useful virtues."

'Twas midnight, when my Sophia was attacked by the pains of childbirth. Alas ! her inexperience and timidity made her believe her last hour was at hand.

Each

Each moment I thought I was about to lose her for-ever.—Great God ! what could I do ? What was to become of us ? Unable to call for assistance !—What a wretched situation ! Never did human being experience greater misery.

Judge of my despair, when I was each moment in expectation of beholding my Sophia expire in my arms.

Great God ! on what dreadful conditions hast thou granted and preserved my life !

But soon what a happy change ! At length she opened her eyes, and the blood began to circulate with more freedom. My Sophia was restored to life, and with her I seemed myself again to revive.

Alas ! My hopes again successively vanished and returned, and then again

abandoned me. — Ah! what dreadful uncertainty and suspense!

Thus it is that Fortune ever sports with our wishes; and before she throws us down the precipice of despair, arrests us for a moment on the edge of the abyss, seems to pull us back from destruction, threatens us anew, and makes us each moment anticipate our fate.

At five in the morning, the bell rang for the first mass. Its chilling sound re-echoed through the silent obscurity of the night, and with ominous voice appalled my very soul. Sophia seemed to awake suddenly at the hollow knell, raised her hands towards heaven, and in a half-extinguished whisper, "Alas!" said she, "I am unworthy to partake in that holy ceremony."

The symptoms however ceasing I attended this awful summons, fervently
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to invoke the Deity to be merciful to my Sophia, in the approaching hour of trial.

But what was my astonishment, when at my return she presented the child to me! It was a daughter. Paternal love now took entire possession of my heart. I received it in my arms, and kissed it repeatedly, while Sophia beheld me with tears of pleasure. 'Twas an angelic look that drew me closer to her, and our kisses and our tears mingled on the innocent face of our child.

"Almighty God," said Sophia, "grant thy protection to this helpless little babe. Ah! may her too sinful mother long preserve her from every evil, and defend her from the stigma she has never merited.

"Ah! cease," said I, "my dear Sophia, to think yourself criminal: Surely heaven has made you a mother,

that you may efface that fault by the most important virtues. You will henceforth be the chastest, the best of mothers: And who can better deserve the favour of the Almighty?"—"Yes," said she, "I will endeavour to fulfil those most sacred, and most pleasing of all duties."

We gave our child Madame de Clermont's name, and called her Louisa.

I was now constantly employed in the requisite attentions both for the mother and the child. Long before the event, I had provided myself with every thing necessary. Under pretext of a wound in falling down stairs, I had procured some linen, and as I was intimate with the friar who had the care of the infirmary, he had given me a key of the dispensatory, that I might myself take what I wanted. As to fuel, very little

was

was distributed to us, though it was winter, and therefore I went every night to collect some in the coppice of the monastery, by which means I procured more than we wanted. Of broth we had sufficient, as I could order as much as I chose, and my indisposition was so trifling, that it was not thought necessary I should be placed in the infirmary, or my provisions diminished in quantity, either of which would have been fatal to our wishes.

Thus was I enabled to furnish Sophia and her child, with every necessary, and became at once her nurse, her doctor, and her cook.

Sophia's distress had now disappeared, and was succeeded by the sweetest of enjoyments. With what eagerness I endeavoured to procure every thing her health required! With what pleasure I witnessed her reco-

very ; with what delight did I see her suckle the little Louisa. To me it formed the most angelic picture, all nature could afford.

The first time she held her to her breast, she bent down her head, kissed its eyes with a timid air, and a sudden glow covered her cheek ; yet a soft satisfaction soon mingled with her fears, and at length overcame her modest scruples.

My Sophia soon afforded me the satisfaction of perfect convalescence ; and appeared more beautiful than ever. Her eyes possessed greater animation, her complexion was more florid, and her features acquired a certain air of matronly grandeur that excited my warmest admiration.

Her maternal cares now occupied all her moments, and made her forget her past misfortunes. Happiness dwelt in her heart, and serenity in her coun-

countenance. I participated her tranquillity, and felt that I was the happiest of men.

Some narrow souls may think the satisfaction we both enjoyed, rather deserving of censure than of praise. But you, Dormeuille, know that such sentiments are the pure dictates of nature; your philosophy is rational, and accordant with the human heart. How is it possible it could be virtuous not to love our child, or not to feel enchanted at having her in our arms, and beholding her innocent face? In short, ought not paternal love, ever to prevail over every other sentiment.

The care and education of Louisa now engrossed all our thoughts. Not only our love for her made us anxious to spare her every pain, and to see her always happy, but our situation rendered this precaution neces-

fary to our safety; for we were obliged to keep her as quiet as possible, that she might not betray us by her cries. In this we have hitherto been wonderfully successful, and she has never given us cause for much anxiety. Whenever the unavoidable evils of infancy give her pain, Sophia takes her in her arms, and redoubles her cares. She diverts her with some attractive object, or hushes her in her bosom. Fortunately the child at no time cries loud, and it appears from experience, as well as from reason, that the easiest way of keeping children quiet, is to make them happy.

It was necessary to our safety that Louisa should not learn to talk, and therefore, as soon as she began to articulate, we only spoke in whispers. This lovely child is now near two years old, and cannot yet speak a single word. She always expresses herself

herself, however, with great intelligence by signs. If she is in pain she looks grave, and throws herself into the arms of her mother, if she is pleased, this is easily perceived by the most lovely smile; when she kisses her mother or myself, and pats our cheeks with her little hands, we interpret these tender caresses as a proof that she loves us and is happy, and I often spread my bed-cloaths on the floor, for her to jump and dance upon, as is natural to her age. Thus have we hitherto avoided danger. Oh! may we ever continue to escape detection.

Yet I cannot help often feeling some uneasiness at our situation. Could it but endure for our whole lives, it would leave us nothing else to wish for. But how many causes might produce a fatal revolution in our affairs, and then what would become of the dear

Louisa? Oh! my Louisa, perhaps one day you will have too much reason to curse your father for giving you existence.

While I am now writing, Louisa is sleeping peaceably beside her mother. What a charming picture! 'Tis Virtue and Innocence embracing each other.

My dear friend, this lovely child is already distinguished by uncommon graces. Her amiable manners resemble those of her mother, and her countenance has the same enchanting softness. Yesterday, when she saw me writing, she took my pen, and smiling archly, made the scribbling you will observe on another part of the paper. You must consider this as a billet-doux from my daughter.

Presently after she raised herself up at the window, and saw the tops of some trees, which she pointed at to
shew

shew me; and then sighed deeply. This sigh tenderly affected my Sophia and myself, and we took her in our arms, and kissed her. Ah! my friend, may heaven preserve her, and make her happy, when we are both no more! But even then what will become of her? What a source of anxiety and fear.

You, my dear Dormeuille, who are a model of friendship, will never forget my dear Louisa, nor her angelic mother. Should any accident happen to your friend, may these unfortunate beings find a solace in your protection.—Adieu my dear Dormeuille.

Our youthful monk wrote various other letters to his friend, containing the most interesting accounts of the progress and education of the child; but circumstances of a peculiar nature prevent our publishing them at present. We shall extract from them a history of all the misfortunes, the two lovers experienced in their cell, a situation no less extraordinary than affecting to every one who is endued with a heart of sensibility or the milk of human kindness.

Wholly occupied with their child, they at length forgot the error to which she owed her birth; and while they watched her growth and the developement of the charms she had received

received from nature, they received from her a thousand tender caresses, by which the innocent little creature consoled them for their pains, and made them happy by the warmth of her affection. How could they feel their sorrows and afflictions while the future and the past were alike absorbed in the love of Louisa? and what unfeeling breast could blame the pleasing illusion?

In the mean while Dormeuille, very uneasy at the situation of his friend, was anxious to rescue him from the danger that threatened him. In concerting his plans and projects for this effect, he thought it necessary to relate every thing that had passed to Madame de Clermont, who had been some time a widow, and might now freely exert herself for the safety of her son. This history had the most powerful effect on her mind. She was
inconsolable

inconsolable at hearing of the dreadful crime her son and daughter had committed ; yet could not reproach them with an act into which they were gradually and almost inevitably drawn against their will. She consulted with Dormeuille, and each took the preparatory steps they thought most effectual. As soon as they had raised the sum they judged necessary for the enterprize, Dormeuille set off with a determination to rescue, those unhappy victims of misfortune from the convent, whatever might be the consequence. But he arrived just two days too late.

The next cell to that of Julius and Sophia had continued uninhabited several years, but at length a Spanish monk named Don Manuel de Armas was lodged there, and by him they were discovered.

About

About this time the child was very ill, and in great pain with her teeth. Sophia exerted all her powers to pacify her and prevent her from crying, wrapping her up in her gown, to stifle the noise, rocking her in her lap, and caressing her in the tenderest manner, but all in vain. Don Manuel, who heard her cries, at first thought himself mistaken, as he could not imagine it possible a child could be found in the cell of a Carthusian monk. He listened, however, more attentively, and heard distinctly the cries of a child, which he concluded, by the interruption of its complaints, to be lulled by a woman. Thus convinced of the fact, and listening but to the voice of fanaticism, he went immediately to the father Abbé, and declared the dreadful secret: but the latter totally disbelieved the information, as absolutely inconsistent with probability, and ordered Don
Manuel

Manuel to preserve the most profound secrecy on the subject, in order to avoid incurring any scandal on the order.

This fanatic, however, was unfortunately too confident of the truth of his deposition; and being highly indignant at the disbelief of his assertions, now eagerly sought new proofs of their truth. He therefore listened with a barbarous avidity, and was soon satisfied.

At night, while Louisa was asleep, Julius and Sophia sometimes conversed, though always in a low voice. But as the separation of the two cells was not very thick, and somewhat cracked, Don Manuel could distinguish articulate sounds, whose contrasted tones convinced him, there was a woman in the cell. Delighted at this second discovery, he returned in triumph to the Father Abbé. The good father, however,
again

again assured him it was impossible, and that he must be mistaken. "No," replied Don Manuel, with firmness, "I am certain of the fact. But why, my good father," said he, "do you doubt the testimony of my senses? Can I be mistaken in most distinctly hearing the voice of a child and of a woman?" — "My son," answered the Abbé, "we ought always to distrust evil impressions." — "What I have said," replied he, "is truth and fact, and you may easily convince yourself of it. I never anticipate a truth to the disadvantage of any one. On the contrary, I am extremely slow in admitting such, and can only believe it when conviction is forced upon my mind. — Father, your doubts of my veracity offend me, and I will be revenged."

Thus inflamed with anger, Don Manuel returned in haste to his cell,
and

and immediately wrote an account of what had passed to the Inquisition.

In the mean time, the Abbé, fearing there might be some truth in Don Manuel's account, or that this young fanatic might do him some injury, that might cause him to repent of his incredulity, determined to examine the cell of the unfortunate Julius, it being customary for the Father Abbé to have a key to every door in the monastery.

What a scene now presented itself! Sophia was sitting with the innocent Louisa in her arms, endeavouring to pacify her under the pain she suffered. Julius was intent upon them both, and keenly affected at his inability to alleviate their misery.

It is scarcely possible to describe either the surprize of the Father Abbé or the horror and despair of the unfortunate couple. They both threw themselves

themselves at his feet, and endeavouring to speak, yet unable to utter a word, presented him the child. Tears were the only language that found vent, and though the good father was at first highly incensed against them, the sight of the interesting and tender Sophia, and her helpless infant, softened his austerity with an emotion of pity, and he even shed tears of compassion. Julius, encouraged by this proof of goodness of heart, related, in a simple manner, all his misfortunes, and so interested the good father, that his philosophic mind now only beheld the conduct of these young people as a weakness that excited his commiseration. "Alas!" said he, "indeed I pity you. Would to God I could save you from the punishment that threatens you, but 'tis entirely out of my power to serve you. The duties of my office oblige me to treat you with

with a severity, without which my own life would be in danger. I fear the Inquisition is already informed of every thing. You must fly this very night. I will myself open the gates for you, but that is the last benefit I can confer."

The worthy Abbé withdrew, his heart overwhelmed with grief, for he foresaw the misfortunes that must await them.

What a blow to the unfortunate Julius and Sophia ! They had now no hope of safety but in flight ; and without money or means of conveyance how could they hope to escape a pursuit, which could not fail to be speedy and effectual. How was it possible Sophia should walk sufficiently fast with the incumbrance of a child, and where could they expect to find an asylum, or to meet with persons sufficiently compassionate to afford

ford them hospitality, or serve them with assiduity, with no other motive but mere humanity ? It was Sophia herself who made these discouraging reflections. Alas ! how could her natural timidity support the idea of flying like a criminal, and being treated with every humiliation. These fears Julius did his utmost to obviate. As he was very strong, he said he would carry the child, and even Sophia herself, and they were certain at least of that support which charity refuses not to the lowest of mankind. “ As to humiliation,” said he, “ ’tis impossible my Sophia should ever experience any. Are not your virtues stamped on every feature ? Who that beholds you would not be impressed with the most sacred respect ? “ There,” they will say, “ is an unfortunate family,” and then they will be melted with our condition. Yes, I will carry my wife, my sister, my daughter

daughter, every thing that is dear to me, and we shall find, under the roof of my friend, an asylum, which the arrows of misery cannot invade."

Thus did this unfortunate and benevolent young man indulge the emotions of his heart, always mistaking his wishes for possibility, while Sophia listened to him with a sort of placid and implicit confidence. "Great God!" said she, "could we but save our dear child! My dear Julius, how much more should I still love you"——

She was interrupted by a dreadful noise at the door, which being presently burst open, two men tore the unfortunate Julius from the arms of his Sophia, from whom he refused to part, till superior force overcame him, while two others seized the mother and her child, and conducted them all to the prison of the Inquisition.

They

They were lodged in subterraneous dungeons, six feet long, by four broad, and seven high, built of rough stone, grown black by age, whence the most unfeeling inhumanity had excluded every avenue of light, and only admitted the air by indirect openings in the wall, to prolong the sufferings of its victims. Such were the horrid dwellings of this unfortunate pair, rendered still more desponding by separation from each other.

The wretched state of their minds cannot be described. Julius, thus removed from his dear Sophia and his infant daughter, probably for ever, abandoned himself to the most violent despair. Sometimes agitated with rage, he traversed his narrow prison with hasty steps, beating his forehead with agony; sometimes he cast himself precipitately on his bed of stones, invoking death or annihilation, since
he

he had now no hope ever again to behold his Sophia or his child.

Sophia, too much depressed to be violently agitated, seated herself on one of the projecting stones of her dungeon, holding her Louisa in her arms, and strove to pacify the terrors of the child at the horrid darkness of her prison. This tender mother, regardless of her own fate, was appalled with horror at the cruel destiny that awaited her child and its unfortunate father. Excess of grief deprived her of the power to weep, or even to complain, yet she struggled to support and soothe her helpless child. All the nourishment that was brought her was bread and water, and of that but a very small quantity. But she willingly deprived herself of what was necessary to her own support that her tender infant might suffer less severely.

It

It would melt a heart of stone to hear the tale of Sophia's sufferings or the history of her days in this horrid dungeon, where her sole employment was to soften the lot of her innocent child. Having now no discovery to fear, she taught her to speak, and to pronounce the name of her father. She told her a variety of little tales to amuse her, and to assuage the terrors of an imprisonment she so little deserved. Their dialogues soon became extremely interesting: but we must hasten to relate events by which the fate of this wretched family was decided.

Julius, having for a time abandoned himself to his affliction, began to examine whether any means remained to save the unfortunate mother and child, of whose sufferings he was the cause. His first idea was to gain the man who brought him his food.

But these men, accustomed to the sight of human misery, are accessible to no feelings but those of avarice, and our unfortunate prisoner had no means to interest him but his tears and afflictions. His endeavours, therefore, were totally fruitless. At length he threw himself at his feet, and supplicated him, by all that could influence the heart of humanity, to inform him where Sophia was imprisoned. "And if I tell you," replied he, with a brutal voice—"You would confer on me," interrupted Julius, the greatest obligation. I have nothing to give you myself, but I have a friend who is rich, and I will write to him to recompense you."—"Well," said he, "she is in a dungeon that way," pointing towards the left, "but there is a wall five or six feet thick between you. And pray of what use is it to tell you?—For you need never
hope

hope to see her any more.”—“What do you mean?” said Julius. “Oh,” replied he, “my humanity prevents me from telling you.”—“For God’s sake tell me,” said Julius, “I would know the full extent of my misfortunes.” “Well, if I must then, in a few days the holy tribunal will sit to try you, and they say there is no hope of pardon.”

Wretched as were his reflections, he dreaded resigning himself to them for a moment. “What,” said he, with indignation, “shall my Sophia perish by the hand of an executioner? No. As long as I have any blood left in my veins, she shall not die.”

After reflecting for a short time on various projects, he determined to attempt making his way through the walls, and then to escape with Sophia and the child. It was a scheme which required an Hercules to accomplish;

but when love and friendship prompt to action, we rarely compare our strength with our undertakings. These motives are more powerful than Hercules himself.

Fortunately he was possessed of a strong knife, which had not been taken from him, and which he now converted into a saw, by rubbing it on the hardest of the stones. He then used it to detach from the door a strong iron bar, two inches thick, which, as many others still remained, could not very easily be missed, particularly as the dungeon was extremely dark.

Julius now fell to work with the most unremitting activity. The enormous size of the stones, their extreme hardness, the cement, indurated by time, the great thickness of the wall, all yielded to his powerful exertions. He did not rest a moment night or day ;
and

and to save time, eat his black bread while he was at work. "Alas!" said he continually, my Sophia is wretched; she is threatened with the most horrid of deaths, and it is in my power to save her." Thus he urged himself to redoubled efforts of unceasing labour.

When he had considerably advanced in his labor, he found his strength suddenly forsake him, and was obliged to sit down to rest himself. "Great God," cried he, "assist me!—Oh! enable me to save the virtuous Sophia. Grant me but this, and dispose of me as thou wilt. Sophia at least has not deserved her misfortunes. Oh! grant that she may live to preserve her helpless child!"

He arose, and returned to his work with renewed ardour. Though the least delay increased his alarms, yet,

notwithstanding his truly heroical courage, he did not advance so rapidly as before, and the stones seemed heavier and more difficult to separate.

At length his indefatigable perseverance accomplished the Herculean labour, and pierced the wall; when passing through the aperture, he perceived, by the glimmering of a sepulchral lamp suspended to the roof, a female lying on straw, with a child by her side. His heart palpitated violently as he heard her groan; and approaching her, he recognized Sophia, whose alarms at the noise were converted into a joyful surprize as soon as she beheld her Julius.

Their sensations at meeting in such a situation, and after so long a separation, can only be conceived by those who are endued with the most exquisite sensibility.

The

The pleasure they mutually received was, alas ! but of short duration. Sophia, whose tender frame could ill contend with the humid and infected air, or the total privation of day-light, and all the afflictions that harrowed up her soul, was almost in a dying state. Her features were so altered, that they alone would scarcely have enabled Julius to recollect her. Her pale and haggard cheeks, her sunken eyes, and her feeble voice, rendered her a dreadful picture of sickness. At first she was somewhat re-animated at seeing him; but she soon sank again into her desperate condition : She beheld him, as it were, with a dying countenance, and pointed to her child, whom she recommended to his unremitting tenderness.

“ Oh, my Sophia !” said he, “ must I then lose you at the very moment when I was about to save you ! Oh ! cursed

fanaticism ! Oh ! infernal prejudices of barbarous and unfeeling hearts !

“ What, have the monsters refused you every assistance ? Are the ministers of God totally destitute of humanity ? ” “ Alas ! ” said Sophia, “ they have given me nothing but black bread and water, and with the greatest difficulty have I procured this lamp. I solicited for it, to remove the horror which a perpetual darkness excited in my child. ” “ What monsters ! ” said Julius ; “ but let us escape from their power, my Sophia. Take courage, we shall yet be able to cheat them of their victims. ”

Having hastily informed her by what means he had penetrated the wall that separated them, he assured her that in a few hours it would be easy to pass in the same manner the outer wall ; and immediately resuming his massy tool, he began to break

break his way on the side towards which he conjectured the street to be ; —when in the midst of his labours he heard the door of Sophia's dungeon open, and two men entered. "Great God!" cried he, throwing himself on the earth, "we are then irretrievably lost!"—"No,—no," said one of the strangers, "you are saved. 'Tis your friend, who is come to rescue you from the hands of your cruel persecutors."

He soon recognized the voice and countenance of Dormeuille. "Ah," said he, "this joyful surprize is too much!" They embraced again and again, and Sophia was once more animated with joy at beholding the friend of the father of her child.

It has already been said that this kind and sympathetic friend had intended to carry off the three unfortunates

nates from the Carthusian Monastery, had he not arrived too late. From the moment he had learnt their new misfortunes, he had been exerting the most powerful interest to procure their pardon ; but being unable to succeed in this object, he had bribed several of the domestics who were employed about the prisoners, and had thus procured access to his friend.

Having said this in as few words as possible, he urged them immediately to depart, and they all drove off with the speed of lightning in a post-chaise, that waited for them a few paces from the prison.

Thus they travelled with the greatest rapidity into Switzerland, where, under the protection of liberty and toleration, secured by the wisest laws, they lived in happy peaceful affection,

no longer dreading the vengeance of bigotry and fanaticism.

A small house in a fertile valley, and surrounded by the most beautiful hills, became their happy retreat. They arrived late in the evening, and the next morning Dormeuille came to prepare them for the visit of a stranger. 'Twas Madame de Clermont, who had quitted her native country, together with her children, to live with this unfortunate family.

It is unnecessary, it is impossible to describe their meeting. 'Tis a picture which imagination will draw for the heart of sensibility.

Determined not to quit his friend, Dormeuille inhabited a neighbouring mansion, where his Leonora long continued to enliven this little circle, and to enjoy unmixed happiness. The closest friendship united them all in the bonds of reciprocal affection, and they

they spread benefits and contentment among all the unfortunate individuals who surrounded them.

Thus liberated from the immediate pressure of danger or calamity, the minds of this unfortunate couple had leisure to recoil upon themselves, and though no external object interposed to destroy the most delicate tissue of earthly enjoyment, yet conscience reproached them with a crime which nothing could obliterate from their imagination.

Sophia, after an interval of ten years of negative happiness, or rather of melancholy content, was removed to a private receptacle for lunatics, and this event, added to the constant reflection that he was the cause of all her misfortunes, preyed so continually on the morbid sensibility of Julius, that Dormeuille, one day surprised at
his

his late rising, when on a visit at his mansion, found him in his chamber, weltering in the blood, his own hand had shed.

He left on the table a letter to the following effect :

“ Forgive, my dear Dormeuille, the weakness of your unfortunate friend. Were it in my power to contribute to the happiness of a single human being, perhaps it were a crime to quit my station. But I can no longer bear to live among mankind, merely to make them wretched, and myself to linger in despair.

“ If I commit an offence in withdrawing from a life of misery, which perhaps the Almighty intended as a punishment for my errors, pray to heaven, my dear friend, to grant me
its

its forgiveness and its mercy. Above all, take care of my lovely Louisa; she alone could attach me to life: but alas! even to her I should have been only a source of misfortune. To you I bequeath the legacy of my duties and relations in life, and the same care you have always bestowed on myself, you will doubtless not refuse extending to a daughter who is dearer to me than my own happiness. Alas! my wife, my sister, my mother—Oh! I can no more—Adieu.”

SUCH were the fatal consequences, such the additional crimes resulting from that criminal indulgence of the passions, for which it is too often
alleged

alleged as an apology, that it may continue undiscovered, and be compensated by marriage.

FINIS.